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FIGHTING CHANCE
BOOK 1
IT ALL STARTS HERE! WITNESS THE MOST STARTLING EVENT IN THE LIFE OF AMERICA'S GREATEST HERO!!

DAVE HOOVER

DIRECT EDITION

JUST CAN'T GET THAT CRUNCH OUTTA YOUR HEAD!
CAP'N CRUNCH
MAJOR CRUNCH EFFECT

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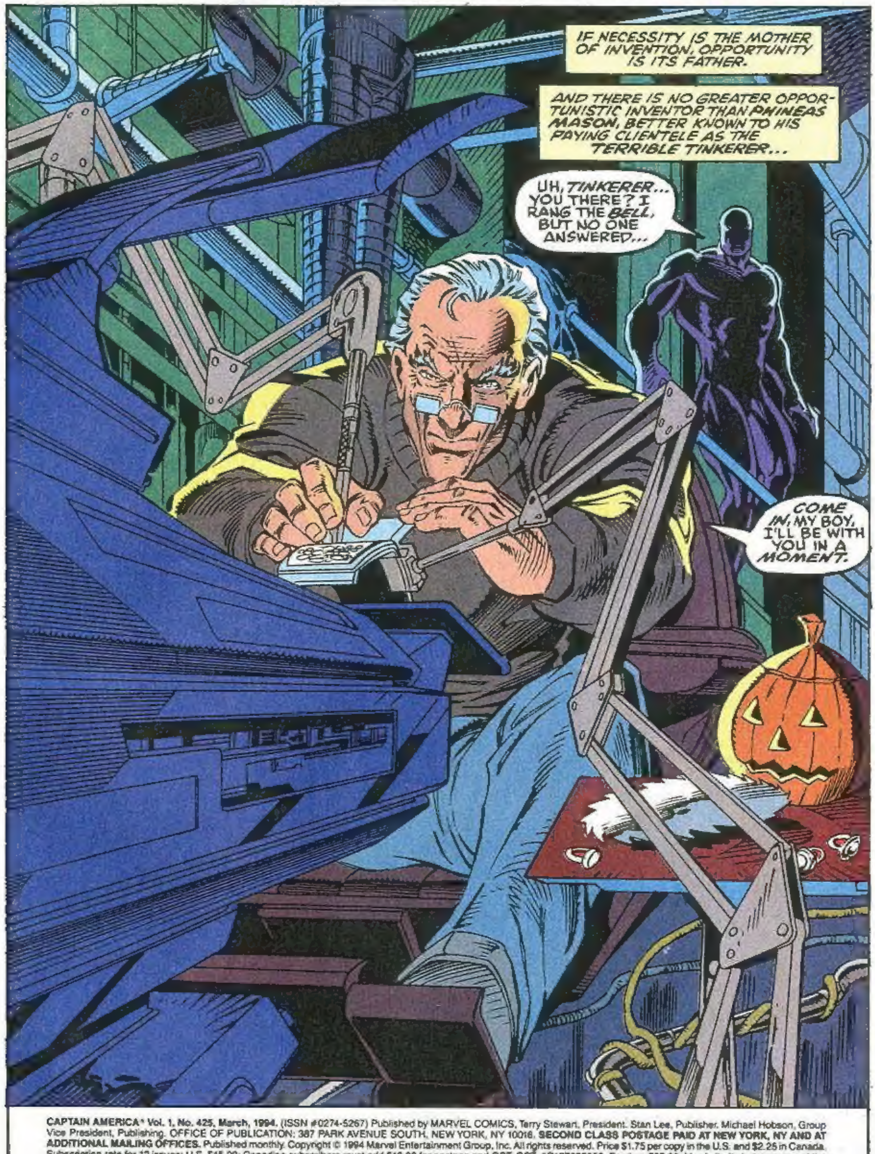
STEVE ROGERS. . . BORN IN THE U.S.A., RAISED TO CHERISH THE IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY, ENDOWED WITH A SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE, AND DRIVEN TO BE THE MOST CAPABLE COMBATANT IN THE WORLD. NOW AS BOTH LONE CRUSADER AND LEADER OF THE RENOWNED AVENGERS, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM! STAN LEE PRESENTS . . . CAPTAIN AMERICA!


IF NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION, OPPORTUNITY IS ITS FATHER.
AND THERE IS NO GREATER OPPORTUNISTIC INVENTOR THAN PHINEAS MASON, BETTER KNOWN TO HIS PAYING CLIENTELE AS THE TERRIBLE TINKERER...
UH, TINKERER... YOU THERE? I RANG THE BELL, BUT NO ONE ANSWERED...
COME IN, MY BOY. I'LL BE WITH YOU IN A MOMENT.

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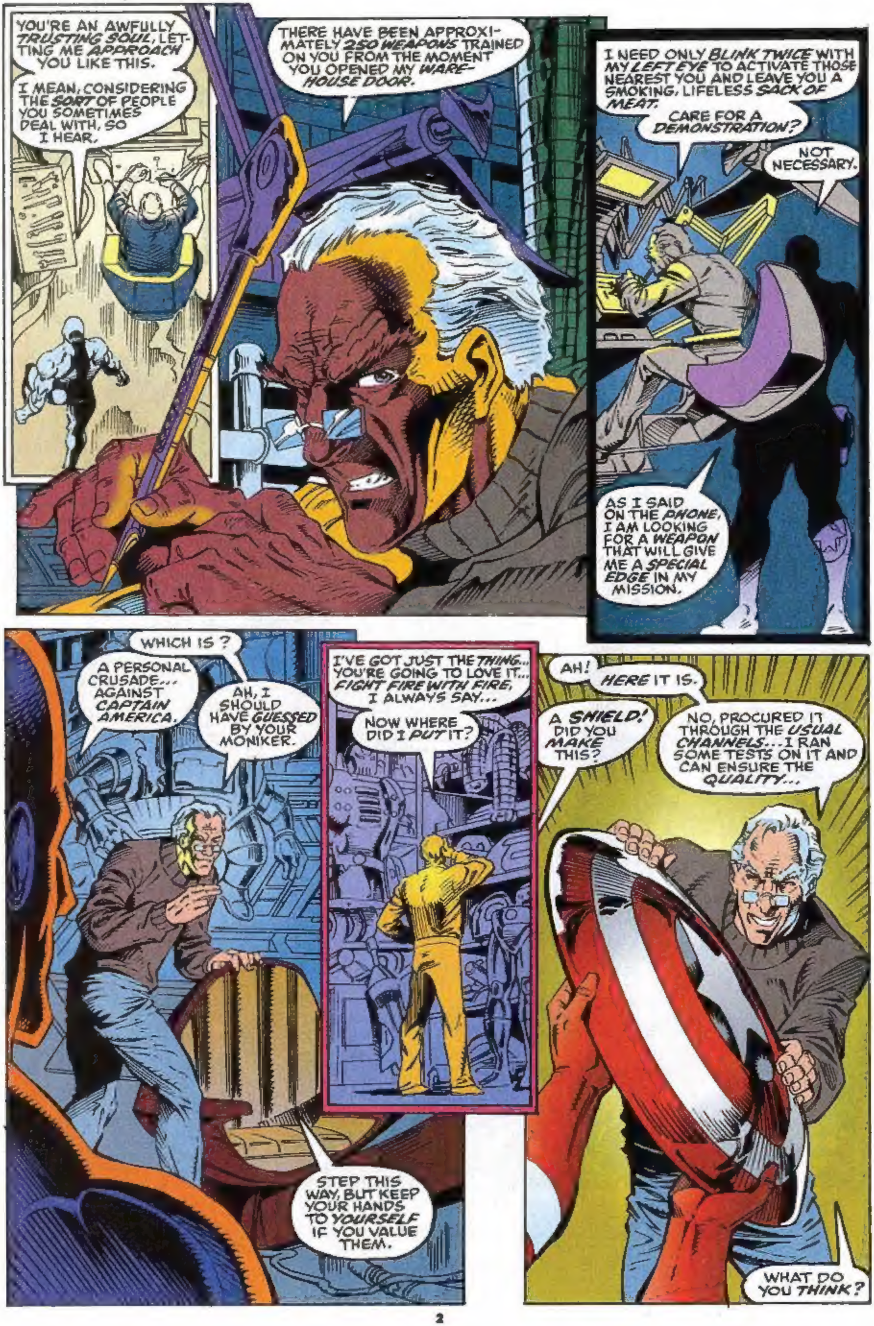
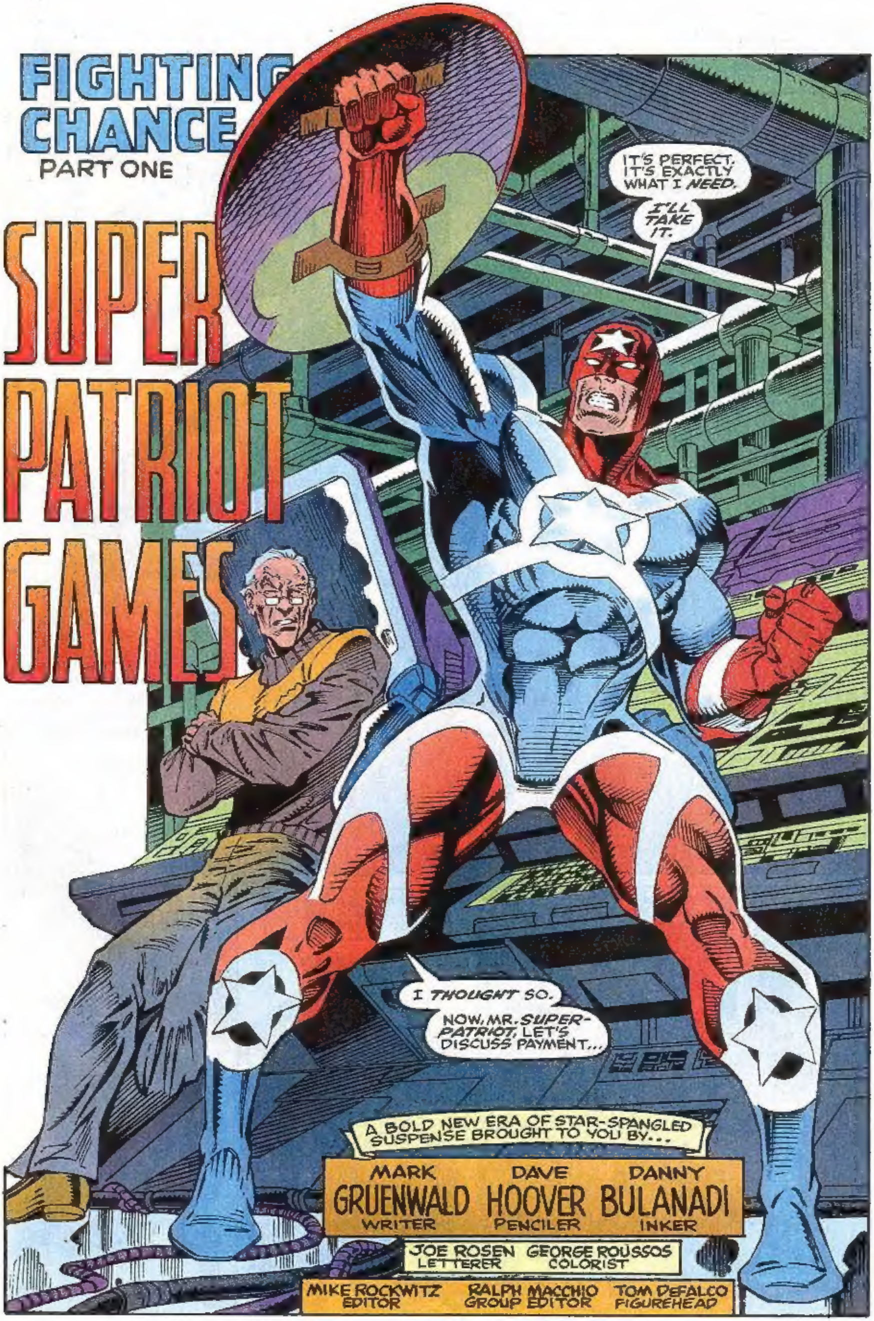

YOU'RE AN AWFULLY TRUSTING SOUL, LETTING ME APPROACH YOU LIKE THIS.
I MEAN, CONSIDERING THE SORT OF PEOPLE YOU SOMETIMES DEAL WITH, SO I HEAR.
THERE HAVE BEEN APPROXIMATELY 250 WEAPONS TRAINED ON YOU FROM THE MOMENT YOU OPENED MY WAREHOUSE DOOR.
I NEED ONLY BLINK TWICE WITH MY LEFT EYE TO ACTIVATE THOSE NEAREST YOU AND LEAVE YOU A SMOKING, LIFELESS SACK OF MEAT.
CARE FOR A DEMONSTRATION?
NOT NECESSARY.
AS I SAID ON THE PHONE, I AM LOOKING FOR A WEAPON THAT WILL GIVE ME A SPECIAL EDGE IN MY MISSION.
WHICH IS?
A PERSONAL CRUSADE... AGAINST CAPTAIN AMERICA.
AH, I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED BY YOUR MONIKER.
STEP THIS WAY, BUT KEEP YOUR HANDS TO YOURSELF IF YOU VALUE THEM.
I'VE GOT JUST THE THING... YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE IT... FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE, I ALWAYS SAY...
NOW WHERE DID I PUT IT?
AH!
HERE IT IS.
A SHIELD! DID YOU MAKE THIS?
NO, PROCURED IT THROUGH THE USUAL CHANNELS... I RAN SOME TESTS ON IT AND CAN ENSURE THE QUALITY...
WHAT DO YOU THINK?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PART ONE
SUPER PATRIOT GAMES
IT'S PERFECT. IT'S EXACTLY WHAT I NEED.
I'LL TAKE IT.
I THOUGHT SO.
NOW, MR. SUPER-PATRIOT, LET'S DISCUSS PAYMENT...
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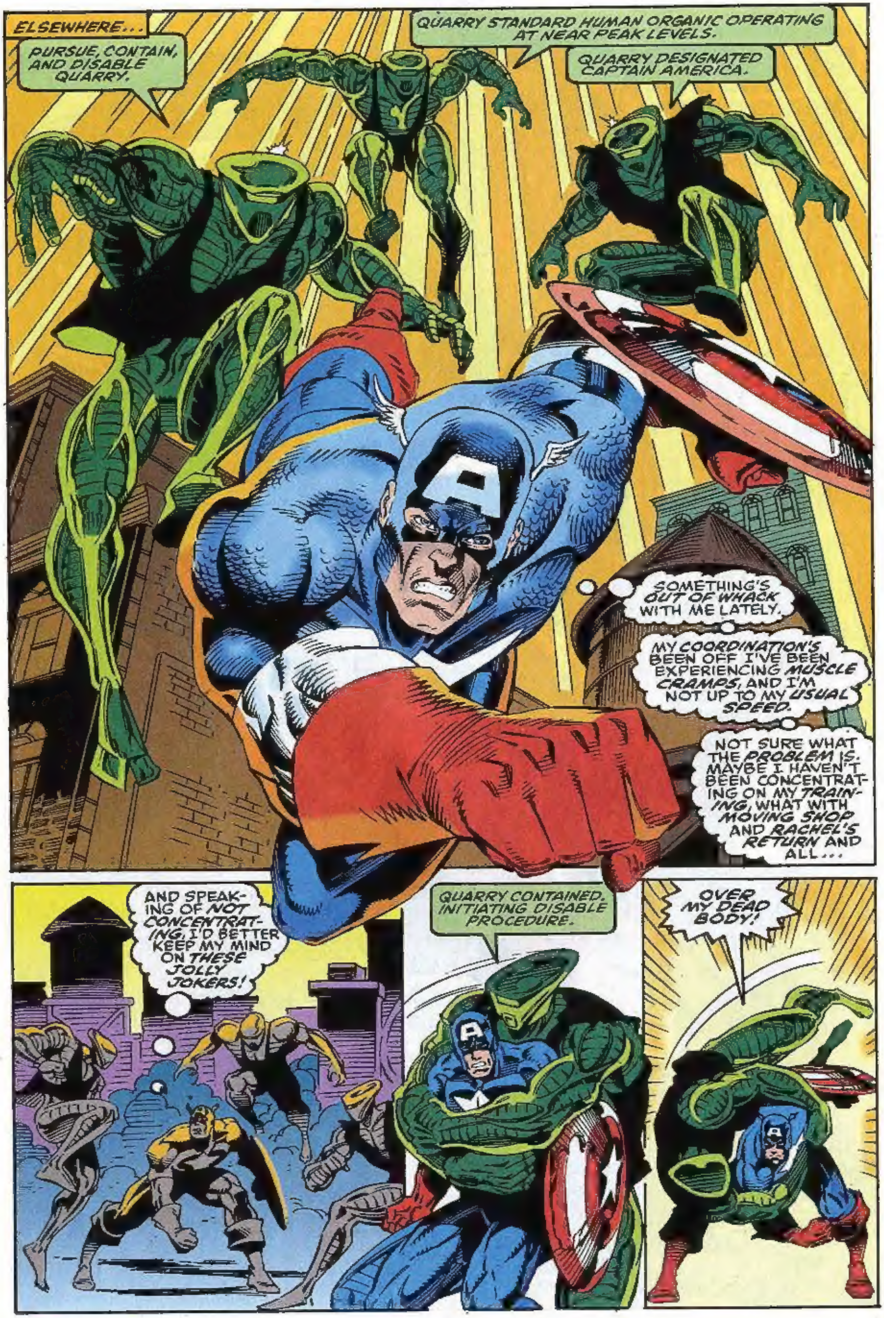
ELSEWHERE...
PURSUE, CONTAIN, AND DISABLE QUARRY.
QUARRY STANDARD HUMAN ORGANIC OPERATING AT NEAR PEAK LEVELS.
QUARRY DESIGNATED CAPTAIN AMERICA.
SOMETHING'S *OUT OF WHACK* WITH ME LATELY.
MY *COORDINATION'S* BEEN OFF I'VE BEEN EXPERIENCING *MUSCLE CRAMPS*, AND I'M NOT UP TO MY *USUAL SPEED.*
NOT SURE WHAT THE *PROBLEM* IS. MAYBE I HAVEN'T BEEN CONCENTRATING ON MY *TRAINING*, WHAT WITH *MOVING SHOP* AND *RACHEL'S RETURN* AND ALL...
AND SPEAKING OF *NOT CONCENTRATING*, I'D BETTER KEEP MY MIND ON *THESE JOLLY JOKERS!*
QUARRY CONTAINED. INITIATING DISABLE PROCEDURE.
OVER MY DEAD BODY!

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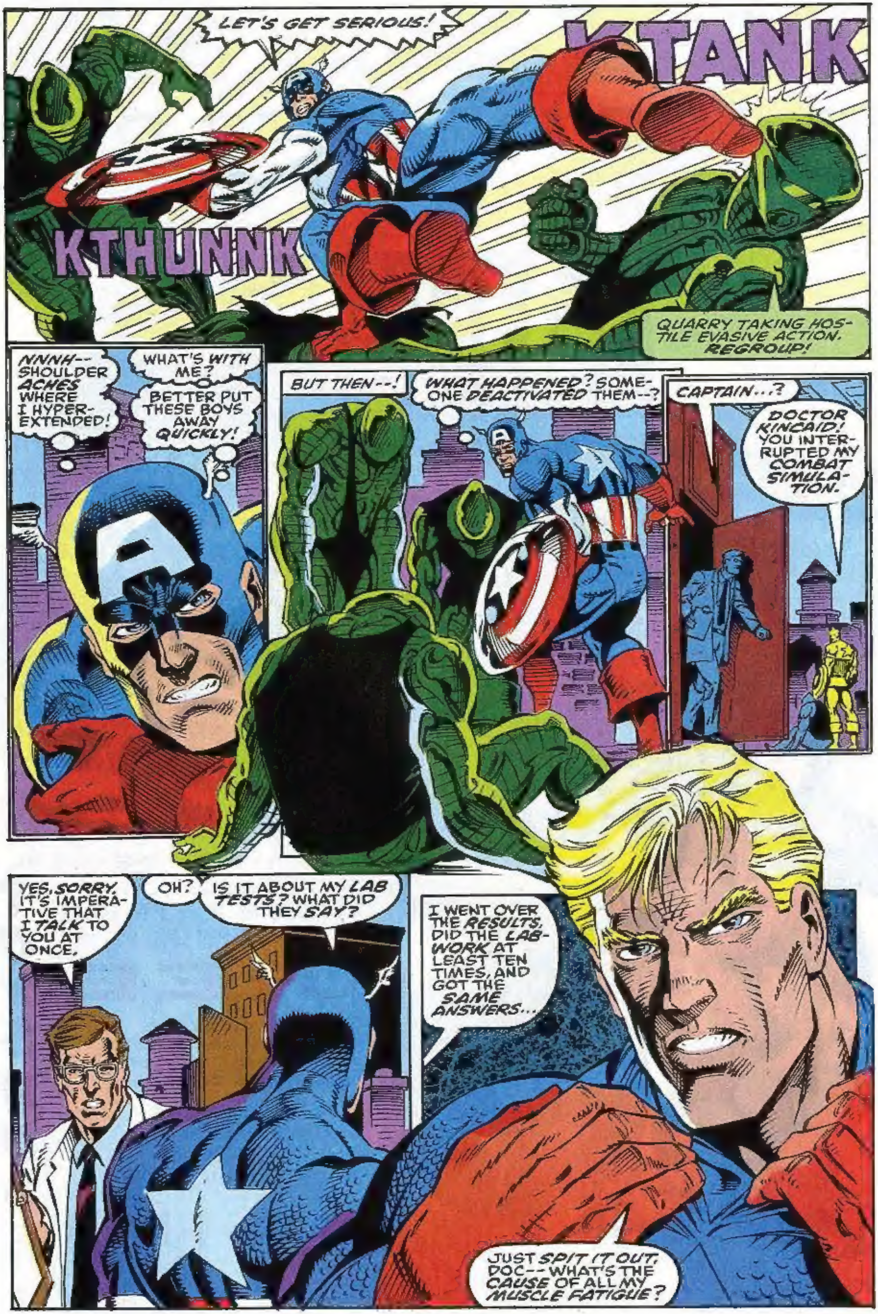
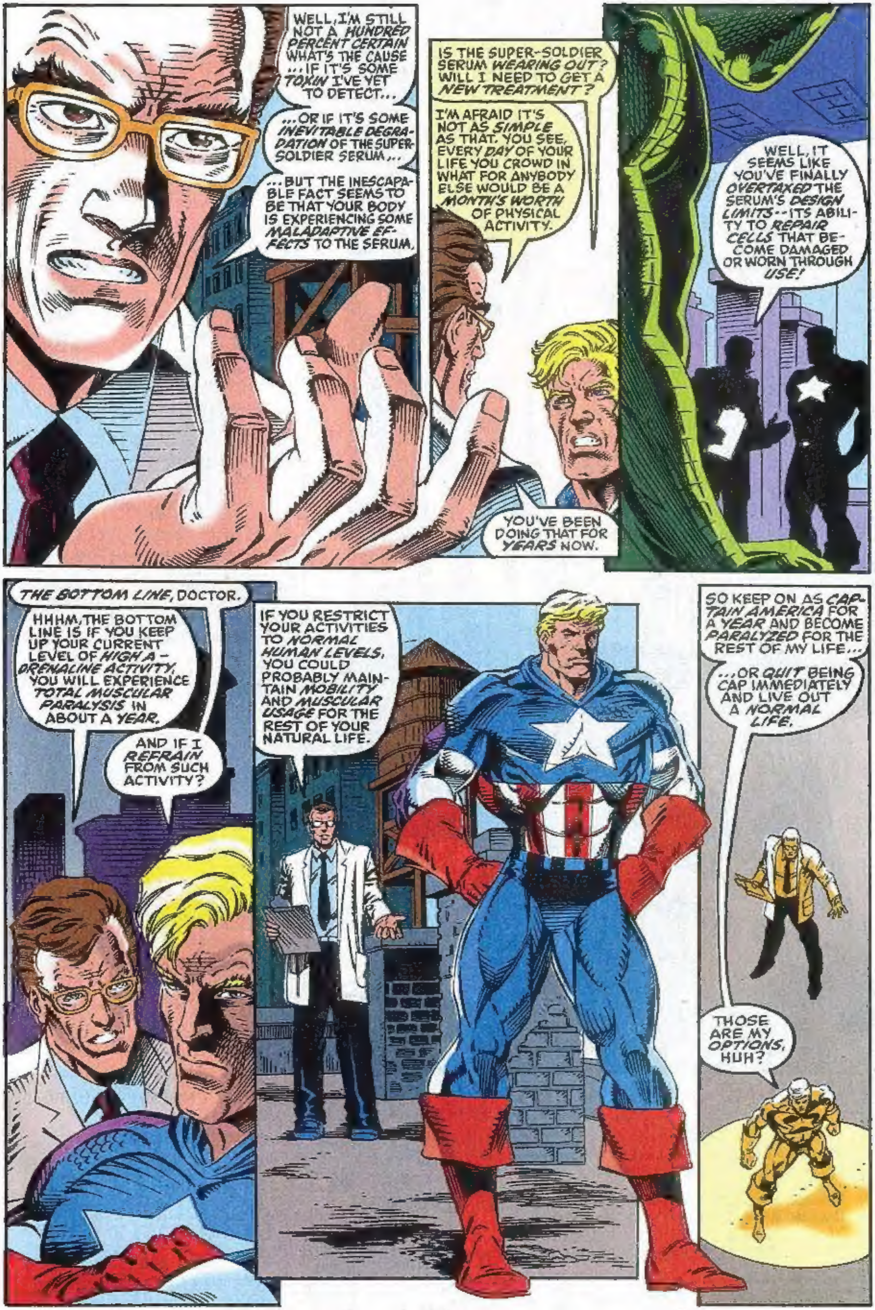

LET'S GET SERIOUS!
KTANK
KTHUNNK
QUARRY TAKING HOSTILE EVASIVE ACTION. REGROUP!
NNNH-- SHOULDER ACHES WHERE I HYPER-EXTENDED!
WHAT'S WITH ME?
BETTER PUT THESE BOYS AWAY QUICKLY!
BUT THEN--!
WHAT HAPPENED? SOMEONE DEACTIVATED THEM--?
CAPTAIN...?
DOCTOR KINCAID! YOU INTERRUPTED MY COMBAT SIMULATION.
YES, SORRY. IT'S IMPERATIVE THAT I TALK TO YOU AT ONCE.
OH?
IS IT ABOUT MY LAB TESTS? WHAT DID THEY SAY?
I WENT OVER THE RESULTS, DID THE LAB-WORK AT LEAST TEN TIMES, AND GOT THE SAME ANSWERS...
JUST SPIT IT OUT, DOC-- WHAT'S THE CAUSE OF ALL MY MUSCLE FATIGUE?


WELL, I'M STILL NOT A *HUNDRED PERCENT CERTAIN* WHAT'S THE CAUSE ...IF IT'S SOME *TOXIN* I'VE YET TO DETECT...
...OR IF IT'S SOME *INEVITABLE DEGRADATION* OF THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM...
...BUT THE INESCAPABLE FACT SEEMS TO BE THAT YOUR BODY IS EXPERIENCING SOME *MALADAPTIVE EFFECTS* TO THE SERUM.
IS THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM *WEARING OUT*? WILL I NEED TO *GET A NEW TREATMENT*?
I'M AFRAID IT'S NOT AS *SIMPLE* AS THAT. YOU SEE, EVERY *DAY* OF YOUR LIFE YOU CROWD IN WHAT FOR ANYBODY ELSE WOULD BE A *MONTH'S WORTH* OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.
YOU'VE BEEN DOING THAT FOR *YEARS* NOW.
WELL, IT SEEMS LIKE YOU'VE FINALLY *OVERTAXED* THE SERUM'S *DESIGN LIMITS*--ITS ABILITY TO *REPAIR CELLS* THAT BECOME DAMAGED OR WORN THROUGH *USE*!
THE BOTTOM LINE, DOCTOR.
HHHM, THE BOTTOM LINE IS IF YOU KEEP UP YOUR CURRENT LEVEL OF *HIGH ADRENALINE ACTIVITY*, YOU WILL EXPERIENCE *TOTAL MUSCULAR PARALYSIS* IN ABOUT A *YEAR*.
AND IF I *REFRAIN* FROM SUCH ACTIVITY?
IF YOU RESTRICT YOUR ACTIVITIES TO *NORMAL HUMAN LEVELS*, YOU COULD PROBABLY MAINTAIN *MOBILITY* AND *MUSCULAR USAGE* FOR THE REST OF YOUR NATURAL LIFE.
SO KEEP ON AS *CAPTAIN AMERICA* FOR A *YEAR* AND BECOME *PARALYZED* FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE...
...OR *QUIT* BEING CAP IMMEDIATELY AND LIVE OUT A *NORMAL LIFE*.
THOSE ARE MY *OPTIONS*, HUH?

WE'LL TAKE A HAMMER TO YOUR MAILBOX!

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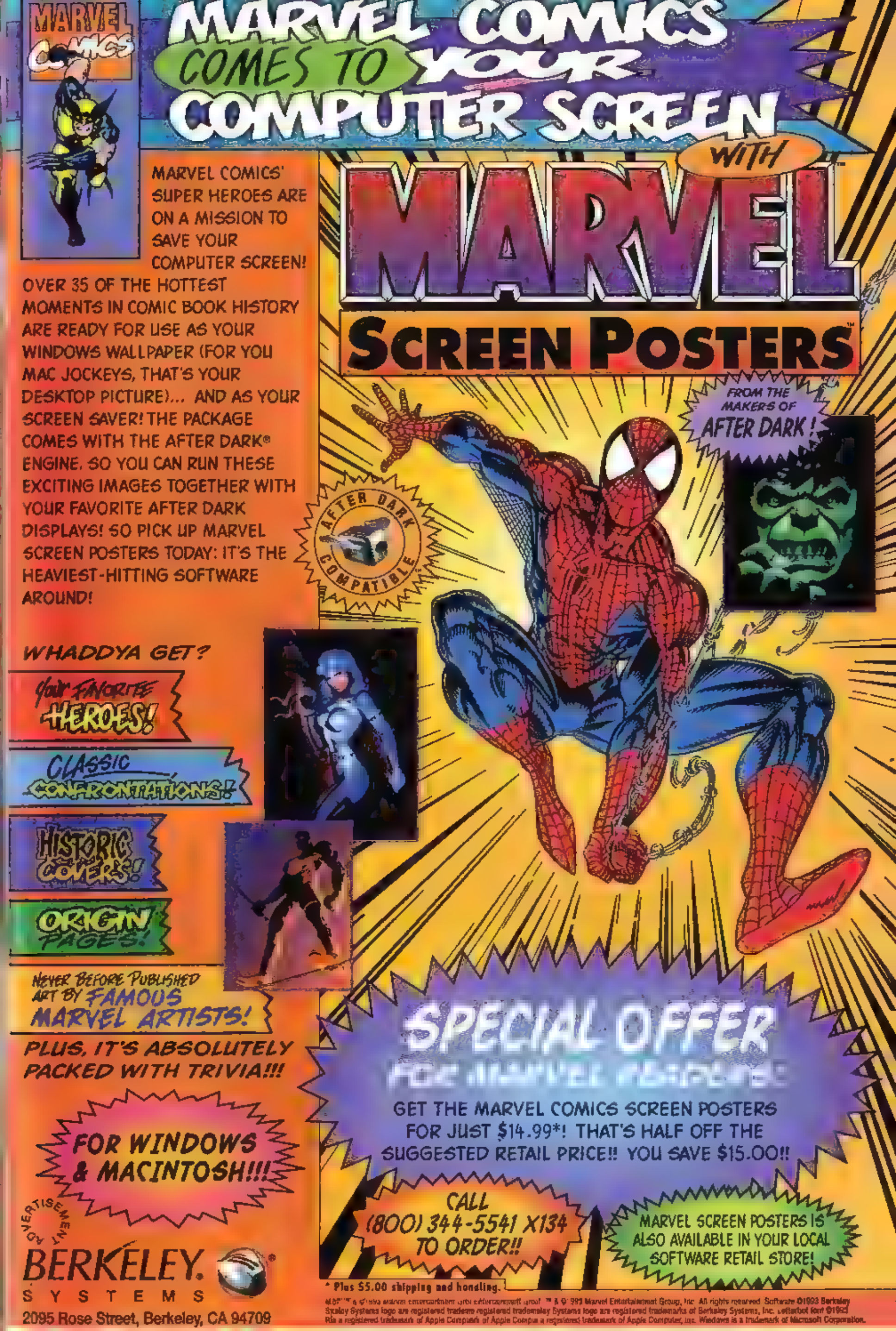

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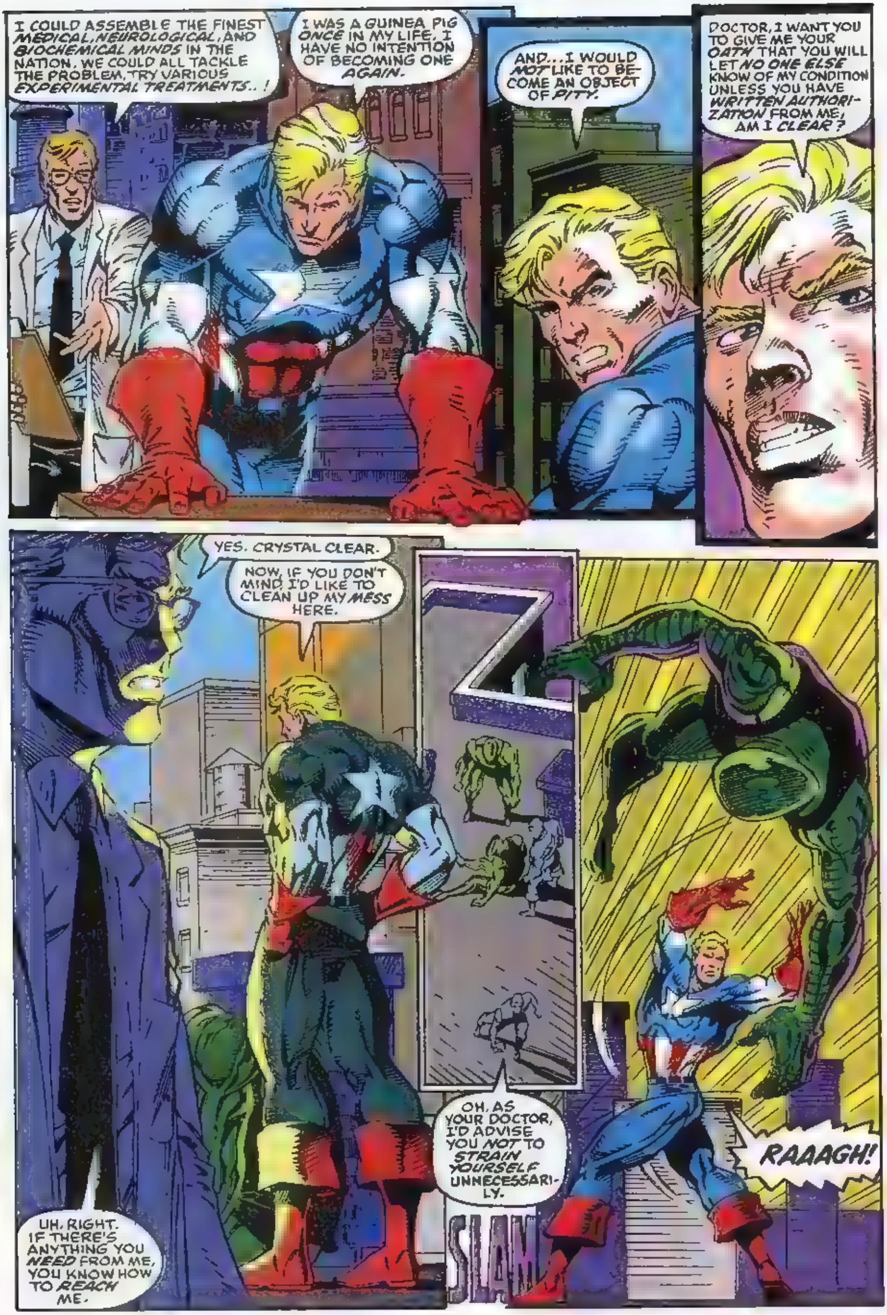
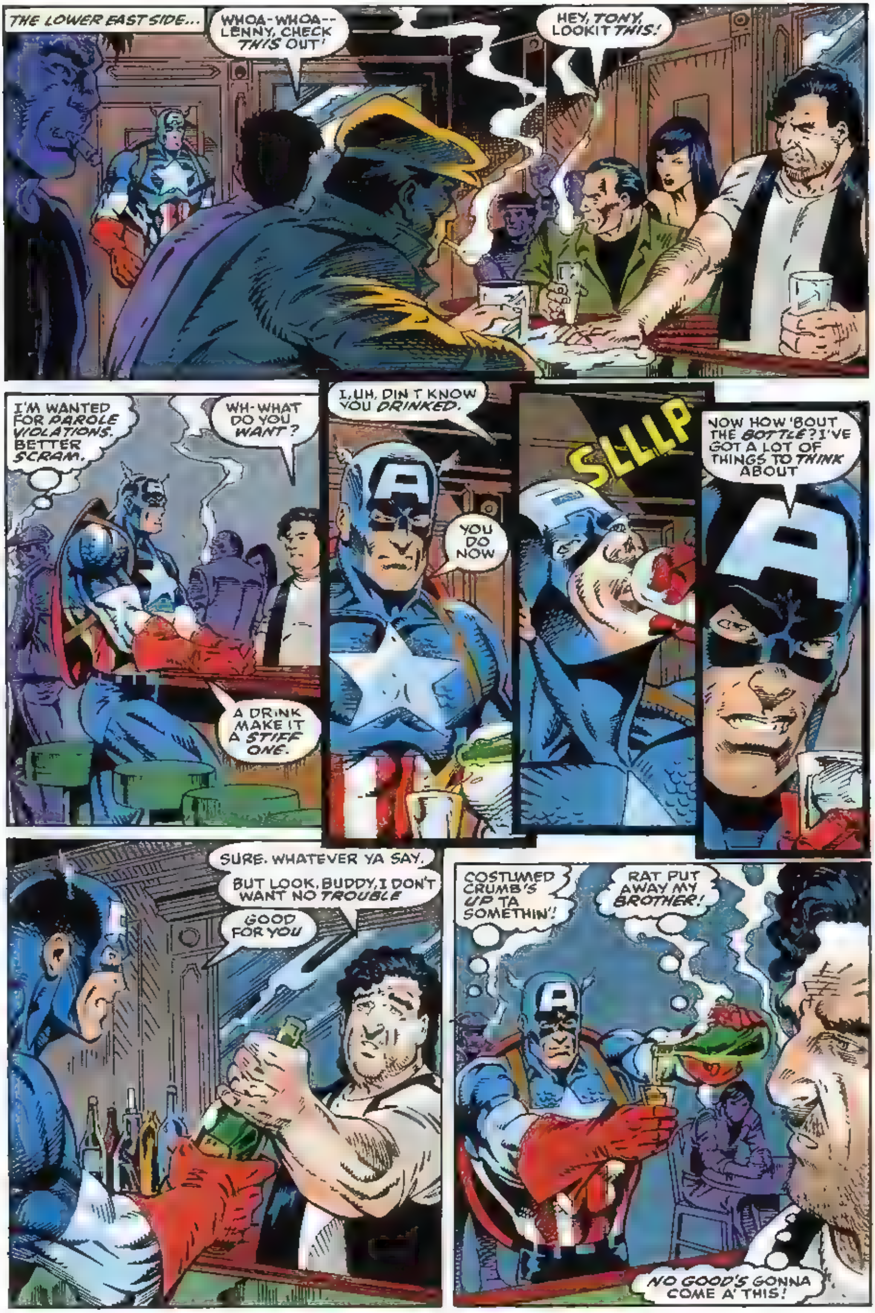

I COULD ASSEMBLE THE FINEST MEDICAL, NEUROLOGICAL, AND BIOCHEMICAL MINDS IN THE NATION. WE COULD ALL TACKLE THE PROBLEM, TRY VARIOUS EXPERIMENTAL TREATMENTS..!
I WAS A GUINEA PIG ONCE IN MY LIFE. I HAVE NO INTENTION OF BECOMING ONE AGAIN.
AND...I WOULD NOT LIKE TO BECOME AN OBJECT OF PITY.
DOCTOR, I WANT YOU TO GIVE ME YOUR OATH THAT YOU WILL LET NO ONE ELSE KNOW OF MY CONDITION UNLESS YOU HAVE WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION FROM ME, AM I CLEAR?
YES. CRYSTAL CLEAR.
NOW, IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'D LIKE TO CLEAN UP MY MESS HERE.
UH, RIGHT. IF THERE'S ANYTHING YOU NEED FROM ME, YOU KNOW HOW TO REACH ME.
OH, AS YOUR DOCTOR, I'D ADVISE YOU NOT TO STRAIN YOURSELF UNNECESSARILY.
SLAM
RAAAGH!


THE LOWER EAST SIDE...
WHOA-WHOA-- LENNY, CHECK *THIS* OUT!
HEY, *TONY*, LOOKIT *THIS!*
I'M WANTED FOR *PAROLE VIOLATIONS*. BETTER *SCRAM*.
WH-WHAT DO YOU *WANT*?
A DRINK. MAKE IT A *STIFF ONE*.
I, UH, DIN'T KNOW YOU *DRINKED*.
YOU DO NOW
SLLLP
NOW HOW 'BOUT THE *BOTTLE*? I'VE GOT A LOT OF THINGS TO *THINK* ABOUT
SURE. WHATEVER YA SAY.
BUT LOOK, BUDDY, I DON'T WANT NO *TROUBLE*
GOOD FOR YOU
COSTUMED CRUMB'S *UP* TA SOMETHIN'!
RAT PUT AWAY MY *BROTHER!*
NO GOOD'S GONNA COME A' THIS!

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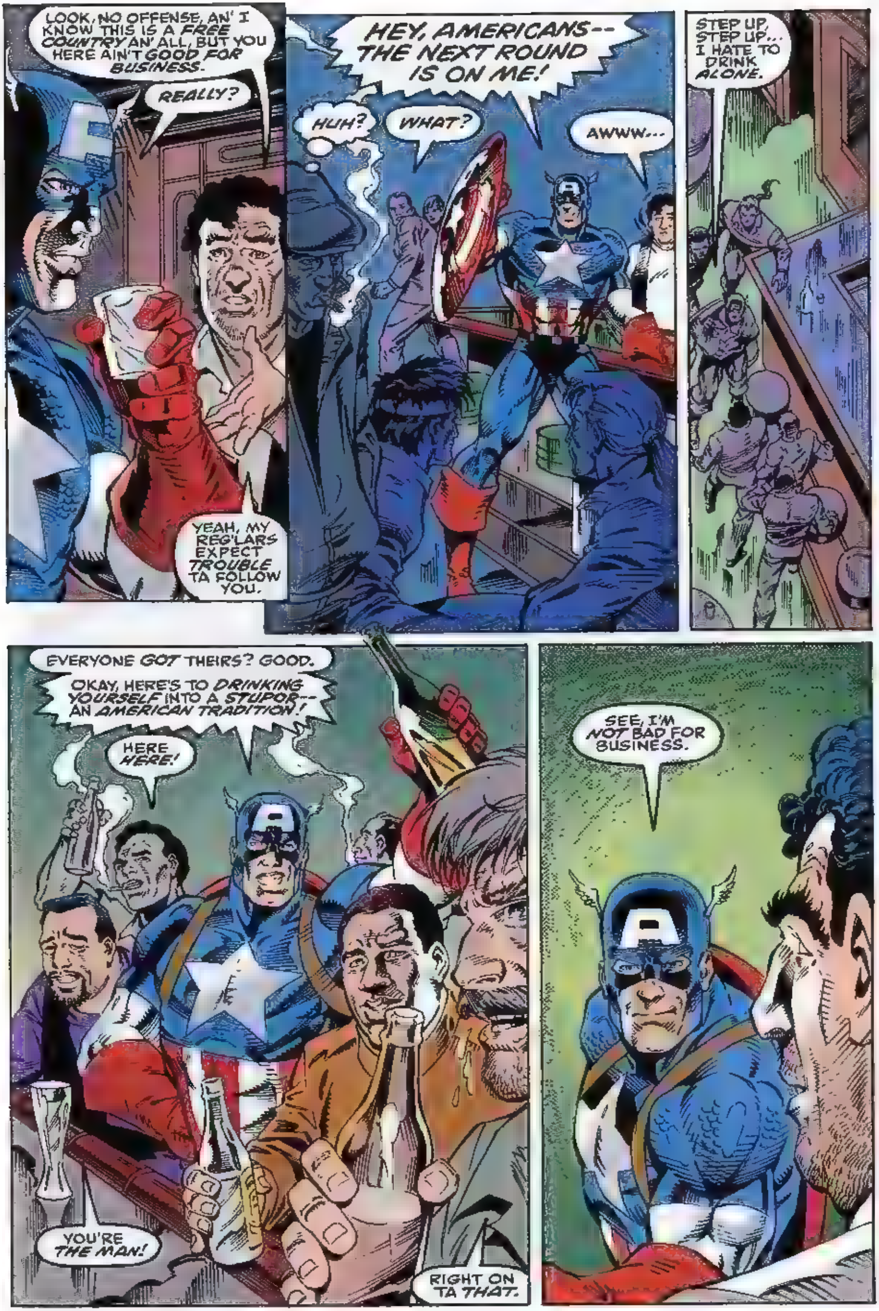
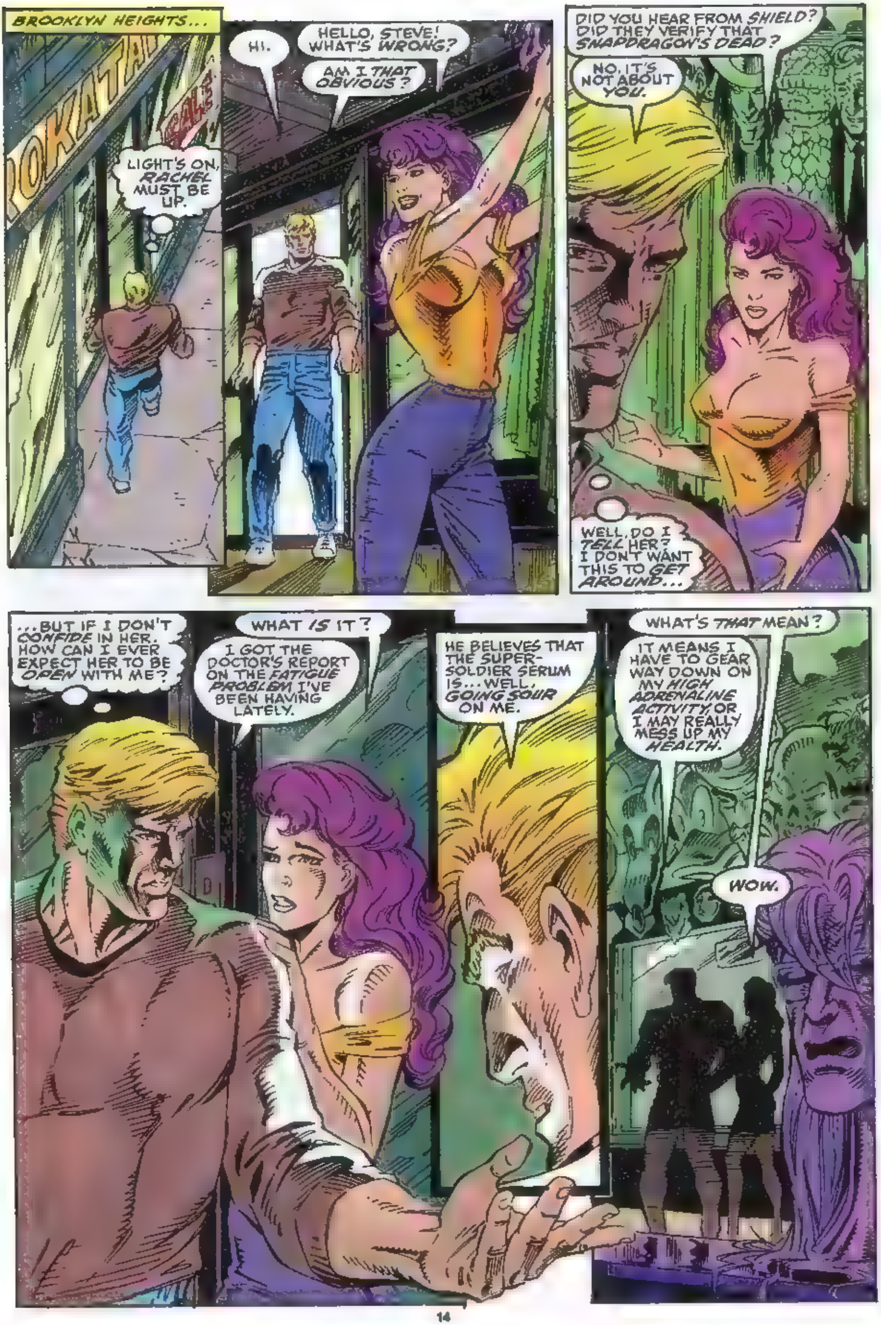
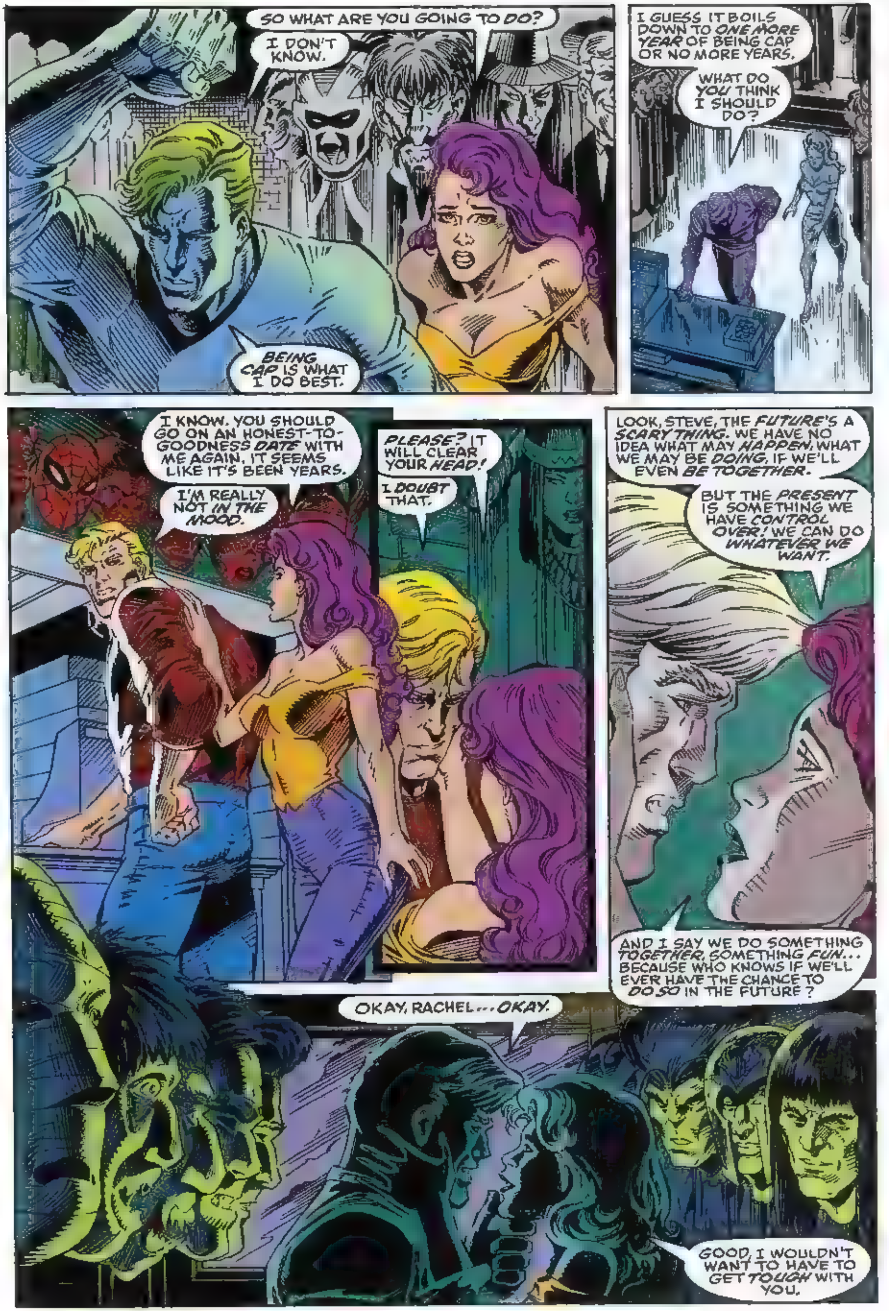
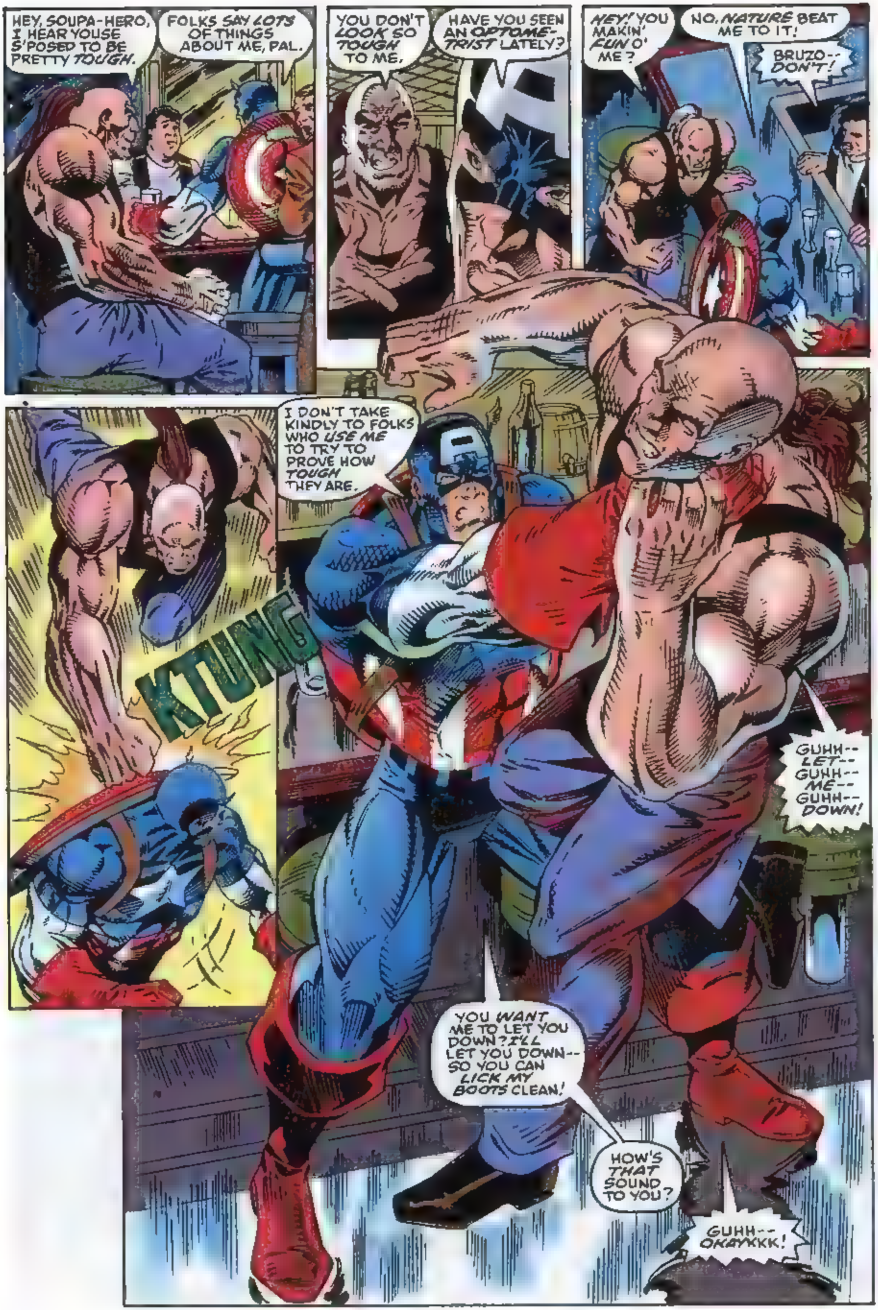
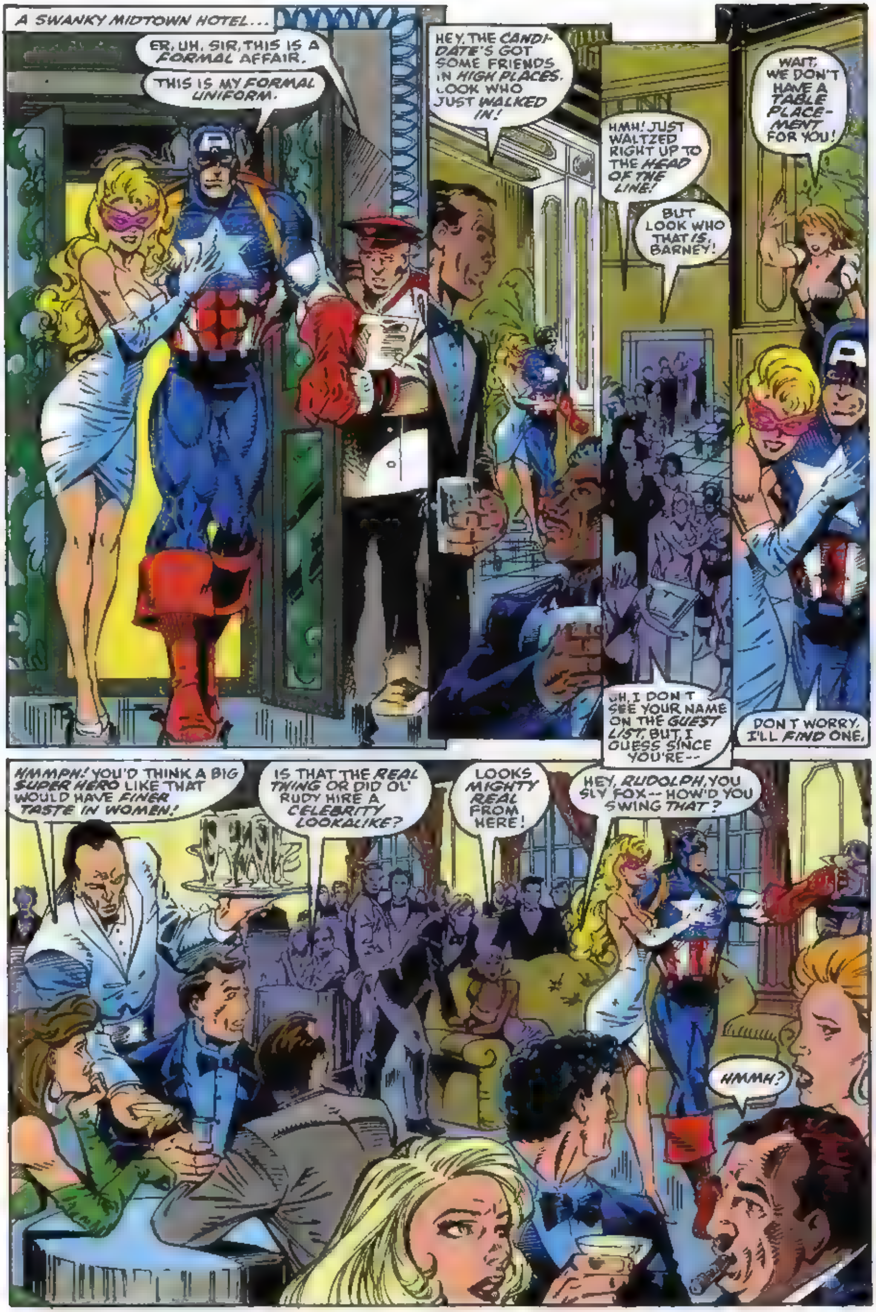
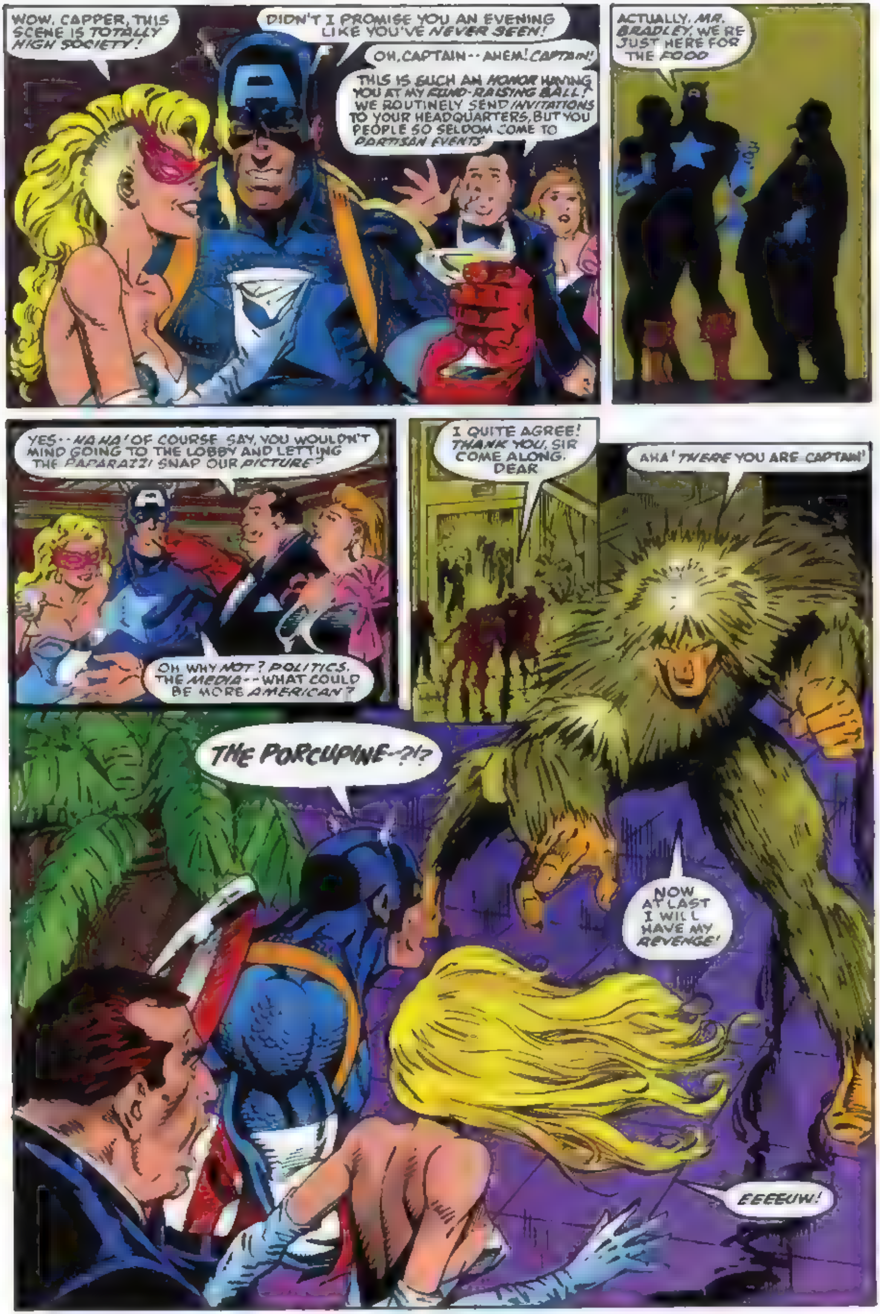

LOOK, NO OFFENSE, AN' I KNOW THIS IS A FREE COUNTRY AN' ALL, BUT YOU HERE AIN'T GOOD FOR BUSINESS.
REALLY?
YEAH, MY REG'LARS EXPECT TROUBLE TA FOLLOW YOU.
HEY, AMERICANS-- THE NEXT ROUND IS ON ME!
HUH?
WHAT?
AWWW...
STEP UP, STEP UP... I HATE TO DRINK ALONE.
EVERYONE GOT THEIRS? GOOD.
OKAY, HERE'S TO DRINKING YOURSELF INTO A STUPOR-- AN AMERICAN TRADITION!
HERE HERE!
YOU'RE THE MAN!
RIGHT ON TA THAT.
SEE, I'M NOT BAD FOR BUSINESS.

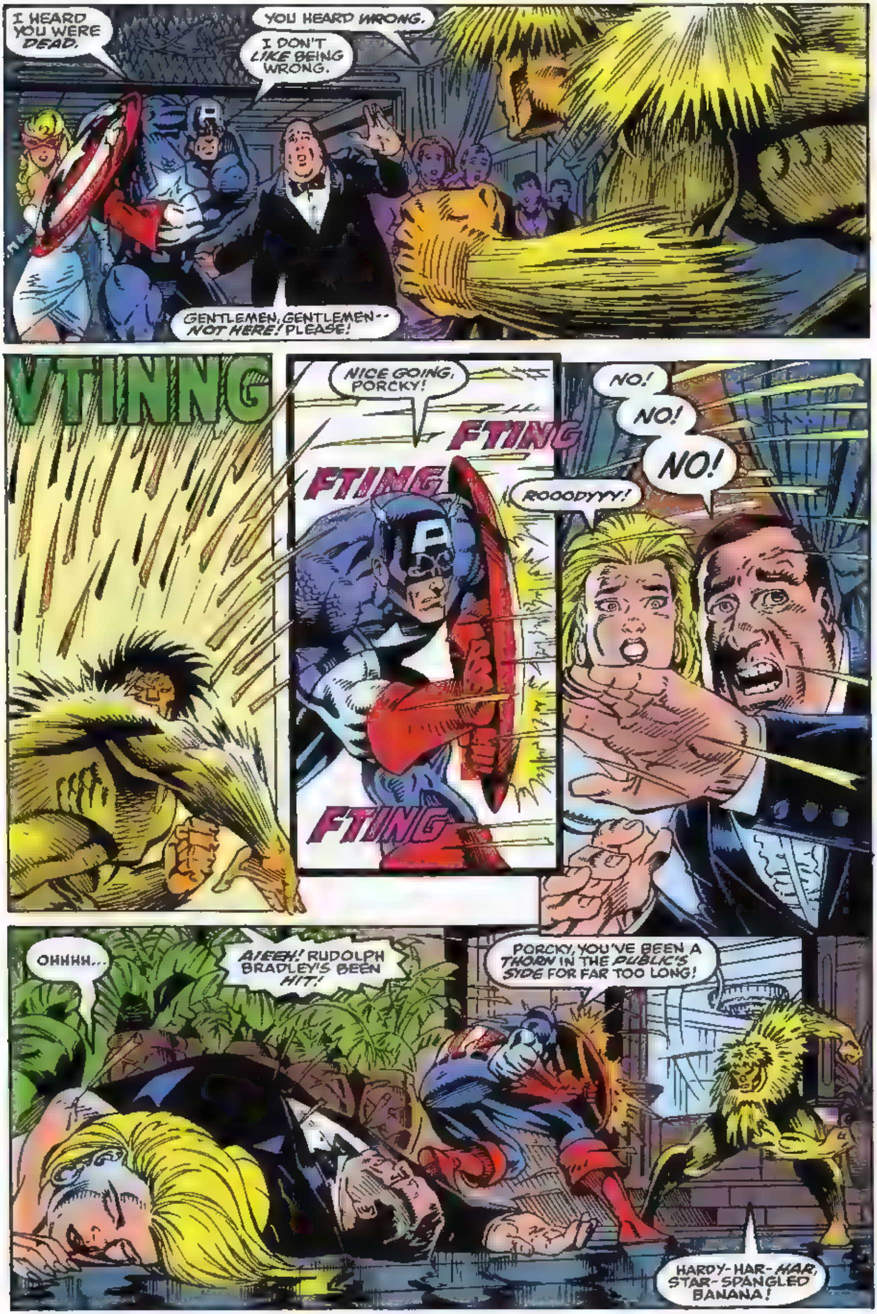

BROOKLYN HEIGHTS...
LIGHT'S ON, RACHEL MUST BE UP.
HI.
HELLO, STEVE! WHAT'S WRONG?
AM I THAT OBVIOUS?
DID YOU HEAR FROM SHIELD? DID THEY VERIFY THAT SNAPDRAGON'S DEAD?
NO, IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU.
WELL, DO I TELL HER? I DON'T WANT THIS TO GET AROUND...
...BUT IF I DON'T CONFIDE IN HER, HOW CAN I EVER EXPECT HER TO BE OPEN WITH ME?
WHAT IS IT?
I GOT THE DOCTOR'S REPORT ON THE FATIGUE PROBLEM I'VE BEEN HAVING LATELY.
HE BELIEVES THAT THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM IS... WELL, GOING SOUR ON ME.
WHAT'S THAT MEAN?
IT MEANS I HAVE TO GEAR WAY DOWN ON MY HIGH ADRENALINE ACTIVITY, OR I MAY REALLY MESS UP MY HEALTH.
WOW.

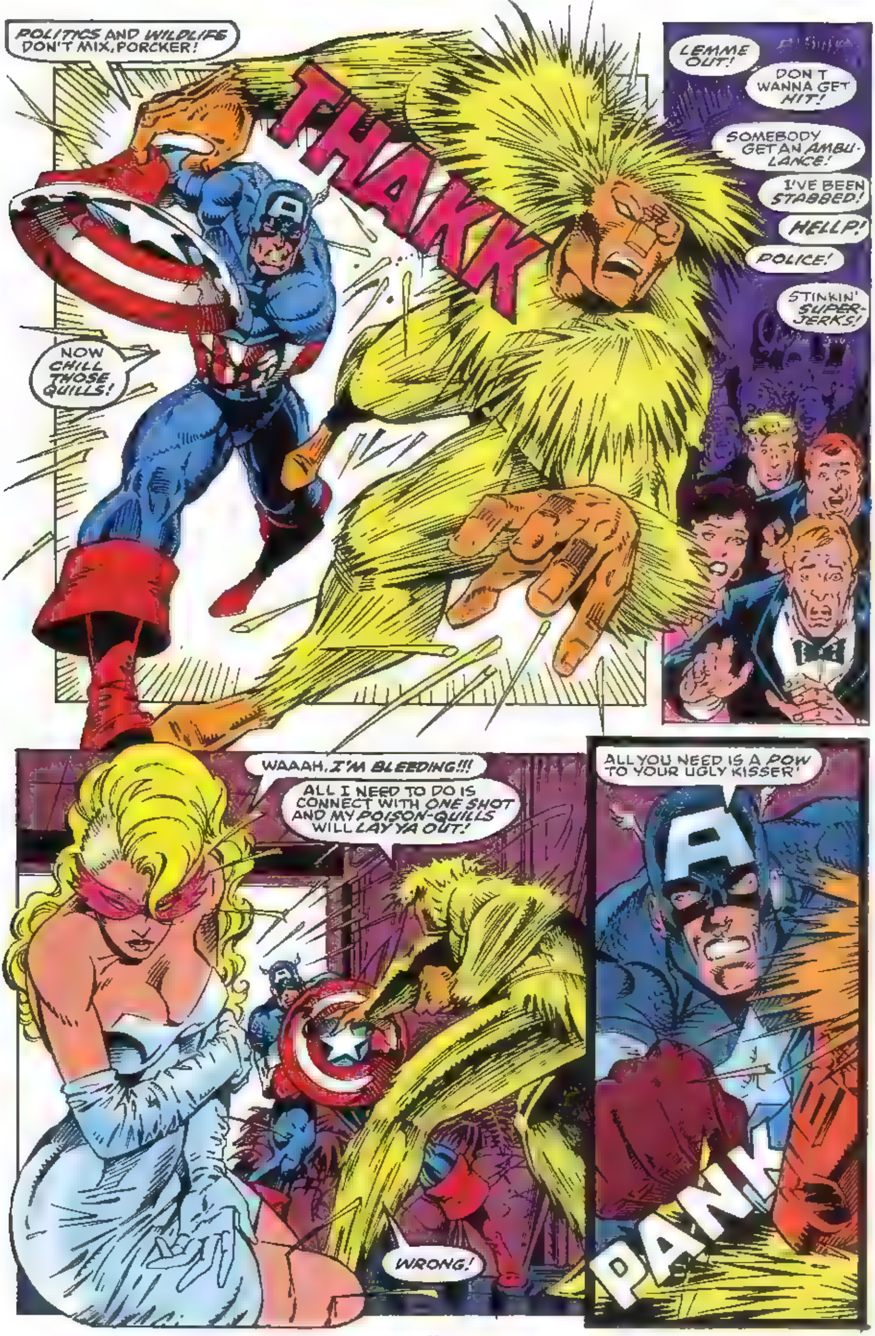

SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO *DO*?
I DON'T KNOW.
BEING CAP IS WHAT I DO BEST.
I GUESS IT BOILS DOWN TO *ONE MORE YEAR* OF BEING CAP OR NO MORE YEARS.
WHAT DO *YOU* THINK I SHOULD DO?
I KNOW. YOU SHOULD GO ON AN HONEST-TO-GOODNESS *DATE* WITH ME AGAIN. IT SEEMS LIKE IT'S BEEN YEARS.
I'M REALLY NOT *IN THE MOOD*.
PLEASE? IT WILL CLEAR YOUR *HEAD!*
I *DOUBT* THAT.
LOOK, STEVE, THE *FUTURE'S* A *SCARY THING*. WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT MAY *HAPPEN*, WHAT WE MAY BE *DOING*, IF WE'LL EVEN *BE TOGETHER*.
BUT THE *PRESENT* IS SOMETHING WE HAVE *CONTROL OVER!* WE CAN DO *WHATEVER WE WANT*.
AND I SAY WE DO SOMETHING *TOGETHER*, SOMETHING *FUN*... BECAUSE WHO KNOWS IF WE'LL EVER HAVE THE CHANCE TO *DO SO* IN THE FUTURE?
OKAY, RACHEL... *OKAY*.
GOOD, I WOULDN'T WANT TO HAVE TO GET *TOUGH* WITH YOU.


HEY, SOUPA-HERO, I HEAR YOUSE S'POSED TO BE PRETTY *TOUGH*.
FOLKS SAY *LOTS* OF THINGS ABOUT ME, PAL.
YOU DON'T *LOOK* SO *TOUGH* TO ME.
HAVE YOU SEEN AN *OPTOMETRIST* LATELY?
HEY! YOU MAKIN' *FUN* O' ME?
NO. *NATURE* BEAT ME TO IT!
BRUZO-- *DON'T!*
I DON'T TAKE KINDLY TO FOLKS WHO *USE ME* TO TRY TO PROVE HOW *TOUGH* THEY ARE.
KTUNG
GUHH-- *LET*-- GUHH-- *ME*-- GUHH-- *DOWN!*
YOU *WANT* ME TO LET YOU DOWN? *I'LL* LET YOU DOWN-- SO YOU CAN *LICK MY BOOTS* CLEAN!
HOW'S *THAT* SOUND TO YOU?
GUHH-- *OKAYKKK!*


A SWANKY MIDTOWN HOTEL...
ER, UH, SIR, THIS IS A FORMAL AFFAIR.
THIS IS MY FORMAL UNIFORM.
HEY, THE CANDIDATE'S GOT SOME FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES. LOOK WHO JUST WALKED IN!
HMH! JUST WALTZED RIGHT UP TO THE HEAD OF THE LINE!
BUT LOOK WHO THAT IS, BARNEY!
UH, I DON'T SEE YOUR NAME ON THE GUEST LIST, BUT, I GUESS SINCE YOU'RE--
WAIT, WE DON'T HAVE A TABLE PLACEMENT FOR YOU!
DON'T WORRY. I'LL FIND ONE.
HMMPH! YOU'D THINK A BIG SUPER HERO LIKE THAT WOULD HAVE FINER TASTE IN WOMEN!
IS THAT THE REAL THING OR DID OL' RUDY HIRE A CELEBRITY LOOKALIKE?
LOOKS MIGHTY REAL FROM HERE!
HEY, RUDOLPH, YOU SLY FOX-- HOW'D YOU SWING THAT?
HMMH?


WOW, CAPPER, THIS SCENE IS TOTALLY HIGH SOCIETY!
DIDN'T I PROMISE YOU AN EVENING LIKE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN!
OH, CAPTAIN -- AHEM! CAPTAIN!
THIS IS SUCH AN HONOR HAVING YOU AT MY FUND-RAISING BALL! WE ROUTINELY SEND INVITATIONS TO YOUR HEADQUARTERS, BUT YOU PEOPLE SO SELDOM COME TO PARTISAN EVENTS.
ACTUALLY, MR. BRADLEY, WE'RE JUST HERE FOR THE FOOD.
YES -- HA HA! OF COURSE. SAY, YOU WOULDN'T MIND GOING TO THE LOBBY AND LETTING THE PAPARAZZI SNAP OUR PICTURE?
OH WHY NOT? POLITICS, THE MEDIA -- WHAT COULD BE MORE AMERICAN?
I QUITE AGREE! THANK YOU, SIR. COME ALONG, DEAR.
AHA! THERE YOU ARE, CAPTAIN!
THE PORCUPINE--?!?
NOW AT LAST I WILL HAVE MY REVENGE!
EEEEUW!


I HEARD YOU WERE *DEAD.*
YOU HEARD *WRONG.*
I DON'T *LIKE* BEING WRONG.
GENTLEMEN, GENTLEMEN-- *NOT HERE!* PLEASE!
VTINNG
NICE GOING, PORCKY!
FTING
FTING
FTING
NO!
NO!
NO!
ROOODYYY!
OHHHH...
AIEEH! RUDOLPH BRADLEY'S BEEN *HIT!*
PORCKY, YOU'VE BEEN A *THORN* IN THE *PUBLIC'S SIDE* FOR FAR TOO LONG!
HARDY-HAR-*HAR,* STAR-SPANGLED BANANA!


POLITICS AND WILDLIFE DON'T MIX, PORCKER!
THAKK
NOW CHILL THOSE QUILLS!
LEMME OUT!
DON'T WANNA GET HIT!
SOMEBODY GET AN AMBULANCE!
I'VE BEEN STABBED!
HELLP!
POLICE!
STINKIN' SUPER-JERKS!
WAAAH, I'M BLEEDING!!!
ALL I NEED TO DO IS CONNECT WITH ONE SHOT AND MY POISON-QUILLS WILL LAY YA OUT!
WRONG!
ALL YOU NEED IS A POW TO YOUR UGLY KISSER!
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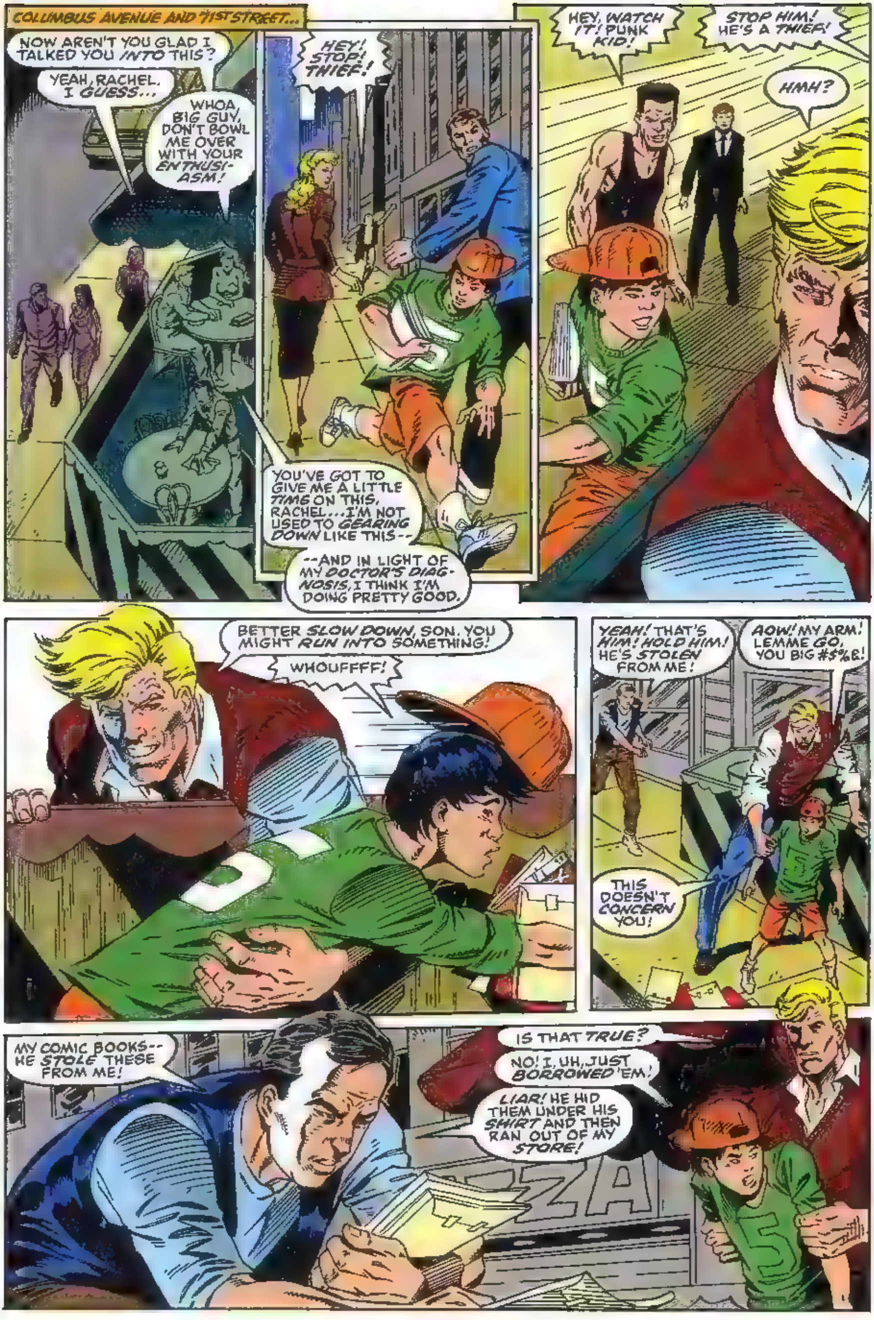
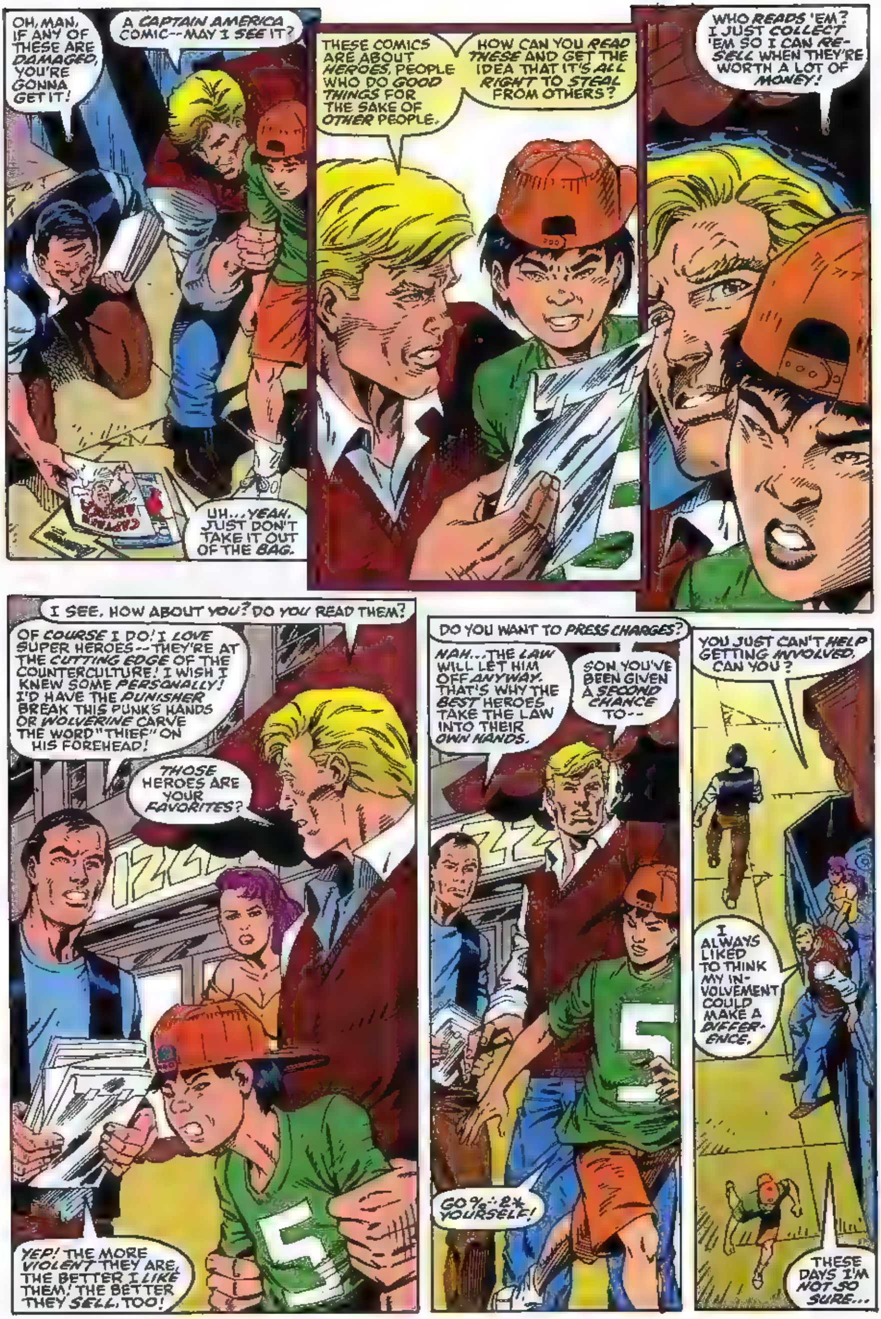

COLUMBUS AVENUE AND 71ST STREET...
NOW AREN'T YOU GLAD I TALKED YOU *INTO* THIS?
YEAH, RACHEL. I *GUESS*...
WHOA, BIG GUY, DON'T BOWL ME OVER WITH YOUR *ENTHUSIASM!*
YOU'VE GOT TO GIVE ME A LITTLE *TIME* ON THIS, RACHEL... I'M NOT USED TO *GEARING DOWN* LIKE THIS--
--AND IN LIGHT OF MY *DOCTOR'S DIAGNOSIS*, I THINK I'M DOING PRETTY GOOD.
HEY! STOP! THIEF!
HEY, *WATCH IT!* PUNK KID!
STOP HIM! HE'S A *THIEF!*
HMH?
BETTER *SLOW DOWN*, SON. YOU MIGHT *RUN INTO* SOMETHING!
WHOUFFFF!
YEAH! THAT'S *HIM! HOLD HIM!* HE'S *STOLEN* FROM ME!
AOW! MY ARM! LEMME GO, YOU BIG #$%&!
THIS DOESN'T *CONCERN* YOU!
MY COMIC BOOKS-- HE *STOLE* THESE FROM ME!
IS THAT *TRUE?*
NO! I, UH, JUST *BORROWED* 'EM!
LIAR! HE HID THEM UNDER HIS *SHIRT* AND THEN RAN OUT OF MY *STORE!*


OH, MAN, IF ANY OF THESE ARE DAMAGED, YOU'RE GONNA GET IT!
A CAPTAIN AMERICA COMIC--MAY I SEE IT?
UH...YEAH. JUST DON'T TAKE IT OUT OF THE BAG.
THESE COMICS ARE ABOUT HEROES, PEOPLE WHO DO GOOD THINGS FOR THE SAKE OF OTHER PEOPLE.
HOW CAN YOU READ THESE AND GET THE IDEA THAT IT'S ALL RIGHT TO STEAL FROM OTHERS?
WHO READS 'EM? I JUST COLLECT 'EM SO I CAN RESELL WHEN THEY'RE WORTH A LOT OF MONEY!
I SEE. HOW ABOUT YOU? DO YOU READ THEM?
OF COURSE I DO! I LOVE SUPER HEROES--THEY'RE AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF THE COUNTERCULTURE! I WISH I KNEW SOME PERSONALLY! I'D HAVE THE PUNISHER BREAK THIS PUNK'S HANDS OR WOLVERINE CARVE THE WORD "THIEF" ON HIS FOREHEAD!
THOSE HEROES ARE YOUR FAVORITES?
YEP! THE MORE VIOLENT THEY ARE, THE BETTER I LIKE THEM! THE BETTER THEY SELL, TOO!
DO YOU WANT TO PRESS CHARGES?
NAH... THE LAW WILL LET HIM OFF ANYWAY. THAT'S WHY THE BEST HEROES TAKE THE LAW INTO THEIR OWN HANDS.
SON, YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN A SECOND CHANCE TO--
GO %·:·&* YOURSELF!
YOU JUST CAN'T HELP GETTING INVOLVED, CAN YOU?
I ALWAYS LIKED TO THINK MY INVOLVEMENT COULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
THESE DAYS I'M NOT SO SURE...

BULLPEN BULLETINS

PROFILE: J.M. DeMatteis

J.M. DeMatteis has been scripting various Spider-Man comics "for a zillion years," as he puts it. J.M.'s first Spidey work came on the late, lamented MARVEL TEAM-UP series, followed by a recent stint on SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN. Now J.M. will be the regular writer on AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, in addition to his other monthly assignment, X-FACTOR. We webbed down your friendly neighborhood DeMatteis long enough for him to answer a few questions.

Where and when were you born?
I was born in Brooklyn, New York, on December 15, 1953.

How did you break into comics?
I broke in on the DC mystery books — *House of Mystery, Weird War Tales* — in the late 70's.

Who are some of your creative influences?
In comics, **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby**. In literature, Dostoevsky, who is my favorite writer of all time. In film, Orson Welles and Frank Capra. In life, Meher Baba.

Which comics have you worked on in the past?
Justice League, Dr Fate, CAPTAIN AMERICA, DEFENDERS, MOONSHADOW, BLOOD, GREENBERG THE VAMPIRE, and recently, some Vertigo stuff like *Mercy*.

Which super-power would you most like to have?
I'd have to say flight. I don't know anyone who wouldn't want to fly. I don't need super strength or anything like that.

Where did you receive your training?
Well, I graduated from Empire State College — which is not to be confused with the fictitious Empire State University that Peter Parker goes to! I was an English and Creative Writing major. I've always done a lot of writing. Before I got into comics, I was a rock-and-roll journalist, doing reviews and articles for magazines like *Rolling Stone*.

What are your hobbies?
Travel... music... playing guitar... singing ... writing songs. I should add here that I hate the word "hobbies," because it takes something which you could be really passionate about and makes it sound trivial.

What advice would you have for aspiring young comics pros?
Persistence, more than anything else. And the ability to listen to criticism.

What comic character do you most resemble?
Greenberg the Vampire. We look alike. It wasn't planned that way, but he came out looking like me. I guess there was something in my description of Greenberg in the plot that inspired the artist to draw him like me.

What is the most interesting place you have ever been?
Probably India. I've been there six times. It's my spiritual home. I find it to be the most fascinating and spiritually charged place on the planet.

Which monster is the scariest — Frankenstein, Dracula, or Wolfman?
I can discount Frankenstein, because he's too lumbering. Between Dracula and the Wolfman... I've always found vampires to be a little bit scarier, because of the physical defiling.

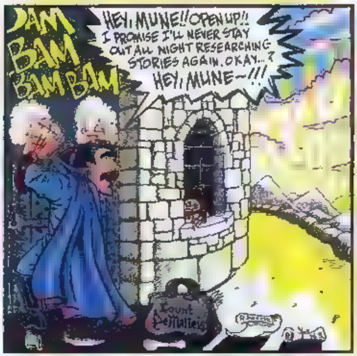
What would you be doing if you weren't in comics?
Hopefully, I would still be writing. Instead of comics, maybe I would be a novelist or a screenwriter.

What TV shows do you watch on a regular basis?
On a regular basis, only *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *The Simpsons*.

How do you want to be remembered many years from now?
Just as a decent human being. But let's stress that that's many, *many* years from now!

THE BULL'S EYE

BY RICK PARKER


BAM
BAM
BAM
BAMBAM
HEY, MUNE!! OPEN UP!! I PROMISE I'LL NEVER STAY OUT ALL NIGHT RESEARCHING STORIES AGAIN, OKAY...? HEY, MUNE—!!!
Count DeMatteis

CRAIG'S CONUNDRUM

There's a lot more to this universe than meets the eye. Even when we get the best eyes that science and technology can create — like the Hubble Space Telescope — what is revealed to us is only a tiny fraction of what is really out there.

So what do we actually know about the powers that rule the cosmos?

Precious little, as it turns out. For all our telescopes, space probes, rockets and Voyagers, we have barely even begun to recognize the forces that shape the universe around us. But in our quest to satisfy our curiosity, we keep looking, probing, searching — without having any idea of what we might find.

And that is the crux of the problem! Is the universe a benign place, content to let us ignorantly expand our sphere of influence out from the shores of mother earth?

Or ... is there a chance that the universe is far deadlier than we comprehended — populated by beings such as Thanos, Terrax, Morg, or Tyrant? And, if there is even a remote possibility of that, do we want to be calling attention to ourselves? Because if that is true, we might find planet Earth at the mercy of the Cosmic Powers!

Check out what I'm talking about in the COSMIC POWERS limited series I'm editing, beginning this week.

Craig Anderson

NOW ON SALE

- **AVENGERS #372:** **Sersi** is crazy about the **Black Knight** — literally!
- **BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD #1**: This comic is cool! Heh heh! Huh huh!
- **BLAZE #4 OF 4:** Blaze vs. **Regent**... and **Roxanne**!
- **COSMIC POWERS #1 OF 6:** **Thanos** fights alone! (He killed practically everybody else!)
- **DOOM 2099 #15:** Enter the exotic world of China 2099!
- **DR. STRANGE vs. DRACULA #1:** And may the best vampire win!
- **ECTOKID #7:** Will Dex's mother die?
- **EXCALIBUR #75:** **Captain Britain** is back — just in time for Jean Grey's bachelorette party!
- **FANTASTIC FOUR UNLIMITED #5:** Introducing the *new* **Frightful Four**!
- **GAMBIT #4 OF 4:** **Rogue. Belladonna.** One lives. One dies. And Gambit has to flip the coin!
- **G.I. JOE #146:** Move out, you goldbricks, and meet the **Mega-Marines**!
- **HELLHOUND #4 OF 4:** He sold his soul... for rock-and-roll!
- **INCREDIBLE HULK #415:** The **Silver Surfer** & the **Starjammers** in sci-fi spectacular!
- **MARVEL AGE #134:** **Beavis & Butt-Head** and the **Fantastic Four** — perfect together!
- **MARVEL COMICS #150:** **Daredevil, Vengeance, Wolverine**, and more!
- **MARVEL TALES #283:** The **Hobgoblin** returns!
- **MORBIUS #19:** Morby and **Deathlok** track the **Wraith**!
- **MORT THE DEAD TEENAGER #4 OF 4:** What if Mort had not died?
- **PUNISHER #88:** The Feds vs. the Mob — just like the Untouchables!
- **SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #219:** At long last — Conan meets **Solomon Kane**!
- **SPIDER-MAN #44:** Never deal with... the **Dealer**!
- **THUNDERSTRIKE #6:** **Blackwulf** is on the prowl!
- **TRANSFORMERS: GENERATION 2 #5:** Read the comic! Buy the toys!
- **WARLOCK & THE INFINITY WATCH #26:** Get set for **Maxam** carnage!
- **WHAT IF #58:** What if **Wolverine** led Alpha Flight?
- **X-MEN #30:** The mutant social event of the decade: **the wedding of Scott Summers and Jean Grey**!
- **X-MEN 2099 #8:** Buy a ticket to the **Freak Show**!

Sometimes it's hard to be a hero
TM
If you're in trouble or having problems at home or in school, call:
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Day or night. The call is free.
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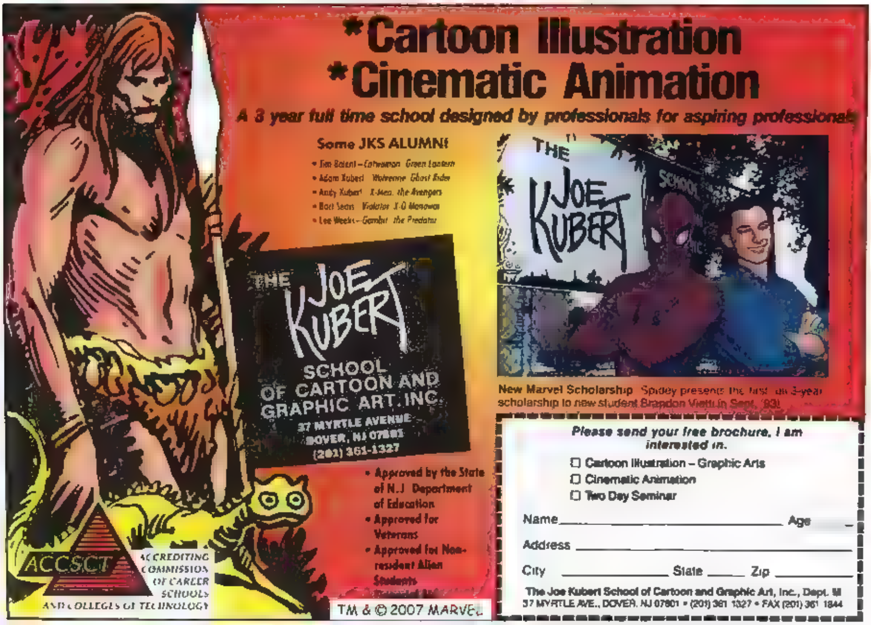

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Some JKS ALUMNI

- Tim Balent – Catwoman, Green Lantern
- Adam Kubert – Wolverine, Ghost Rider
- Andy Kubert – X-Men, the Avengers
- Bart Sears – Violator, X-O Manowar
- Lee Weeks – Gambit, the Predator

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New Marvel Scholarship Spidey presents the first all 3-year scholarship to new student Brandon Vietti in Sept. '93!

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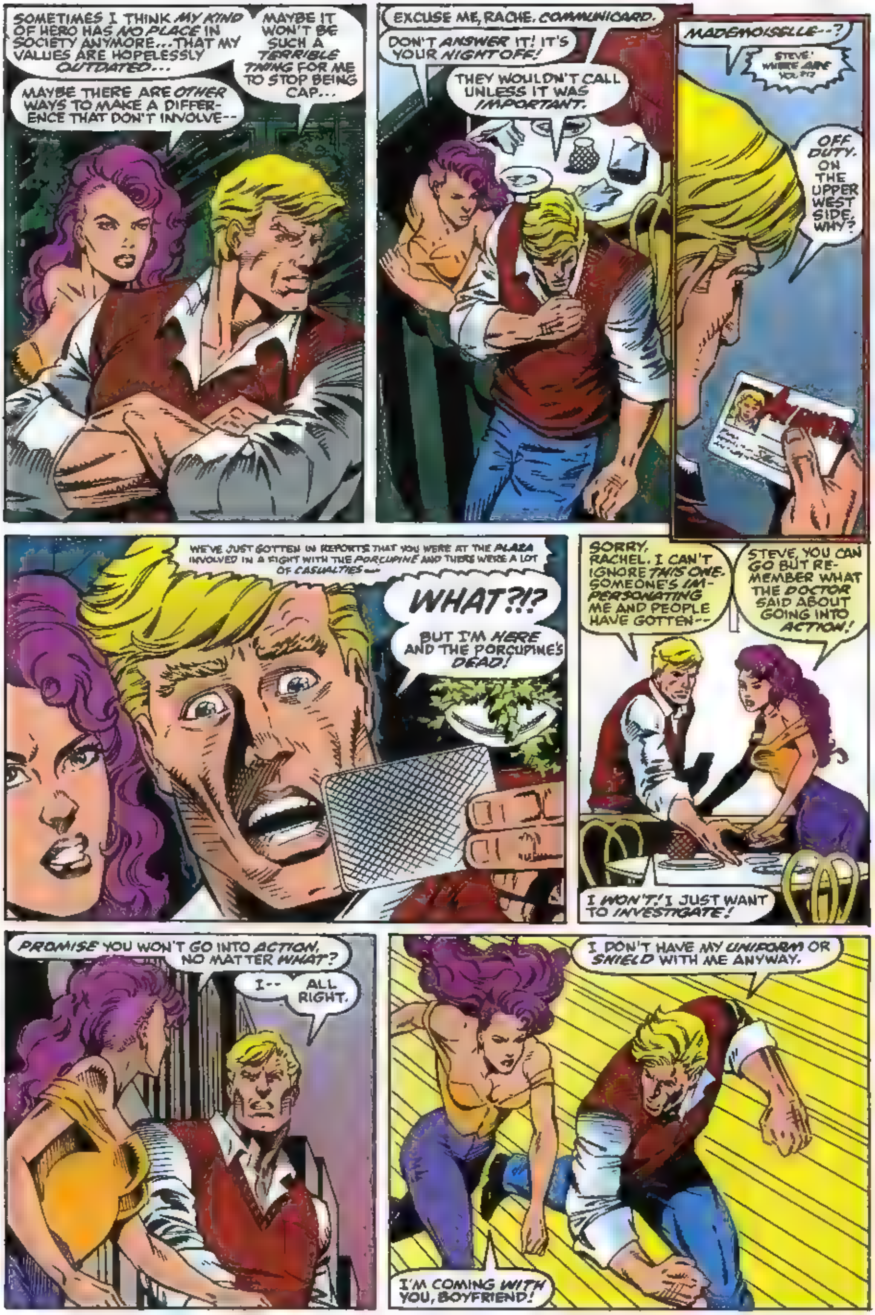
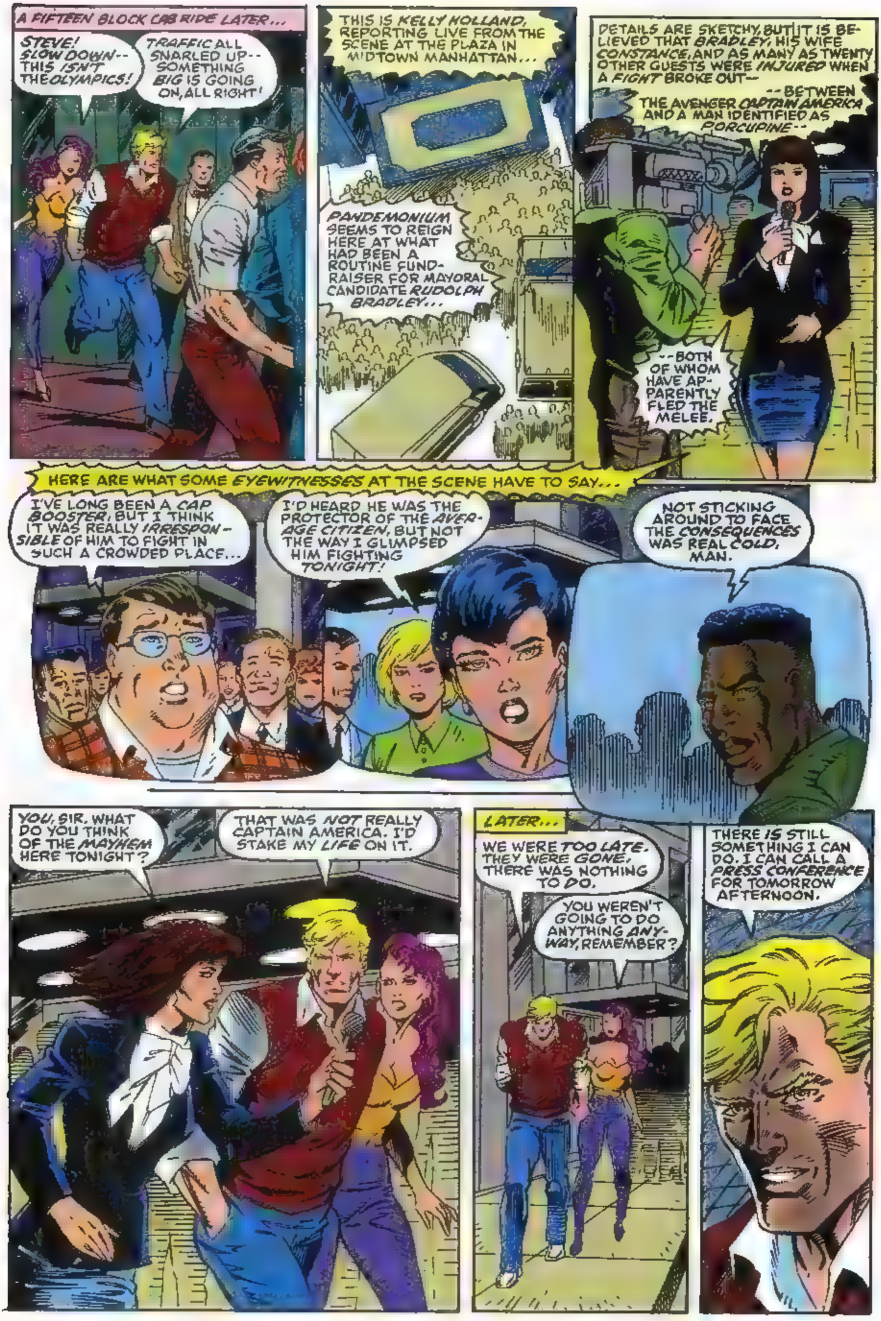

SOMETIMES I THINK MY KIND OF HERO HAS NO PLACE IN SOCIETY ANYMORE...THAT MY VALUES ARE HOPELESSLY OUTDATED...
MAYBE IT WON'T BE SUCH A TERRIBLE THING FOR ME TO STOP BEING CAP...
MAYBE THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE THAT DON'T INVOLVE--
EXCUSE ME, RACHE. COMMUNICARD.
DON'T ANSWER IT! IT'S YOUR NIGHT OFF!
THEY WOULDN'T CALL UNLESS IT WAS IMPORTANT.
MADEMOISELLE--?
STEVE! WHERE ARE YOU?!?
OFF DUTY. ON THE UPPER WEST SIDE. WHY?
WE'VE JUST GOTTEN IN REPORTS THAT YOU WERE AT THE PLAZA INVOLVED IN A FIGHT WITH THE PORCUPINE AND THERE WERE A LOT OF CASUALTIES--
WHAT?!?
BUT I'M HERE AND THE PORCUPINE'S DEAD!
SORRY, RACHEL. I CAN'T IGNORE THIS ONE. SOMEONE'S IMPERSONATING ME AND PEOPLE HAVE GOTTEN--
STEVE, YOU CAN GO BUT REMEMBER WHAT THE DOCTOR SAID ABOUT GOING INTO ACTION!
I WON'T! I JUST WANT TO INVESTIGATE!
PROMISE YOU WON'T GO INTO ACTION, NO MATTER WHAT?
I-- ALL RIGHT.
I DON'T HAVE MY UNIFORM OR SHIELD WITH ME ANYWAY.
I'M COMING WITH YOU, BOYFRIEND!


A FIFTEEN BLOCK CAB RIDE LATER...
STEVE! SLOW DOWN-- THIS ISN'T THE OLYMPICS!
TRAFFIC ALL SNARLED UP-- SOMETHING BIG IS GOING ON, ALL RIGHT!
THIS IS KELLY HOLLAND, REPORTING LIVE FROM THE SCENE AT THE PLAZA IN MIDTOWN MANHATTAN...
PANDEMONIUM SEEMS TO REIGN HERE AT WHAT HAD BEEN A ROUTINE FUND-RAISER FOR MAYORAL CANDIDATE RUDOLPH BRADLEY...
DETAILS ARE SKETCHY, BUT IT IS BELIEVED THAT BRADLEY, HIS WIFE CONSTANCE, AND AS MANY AS TWENTY OTHER GUESTS WERE INJURED WHEN A FIGHT BROKE OUT--
--BETWEEN THE AVENGER CAPTAIN AMERICA AND A MAN IDENTIFIED AS PORCUPINE--
--BOTH OF WHOM HAVE APPARENTLY FLED THE MELEE.
HERE ARE WHAT SOME EYEWITNESSES AT THE SCENE HAVE TO SAY...
I'VE LONG BEEN A CAP BOOSTER, BUT I THINK IT WAS REALLY IRRESPONSIBLE OF HIM TO FIGHT IN SUCH A CROWDED PLACE...
I'D HEARD HE WAS THE PROTECTOR OF THE AVERAGE CITIZEN, BUT NOT THE WAY I GLIMPSED HIM FIGHTING TONIGHT!
NOT STICKING AROUND TO FACE THE CONSEQUENCES WAS REAL COLD, MAN.
YOU, SIR. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE MAYHEM HERE TONIGHT?
THAT WAS NOT REALLY CAPTAIN AMERICA. I'D STAKE MY LIFE ON IT.
LATER...
WE WERE TOO LATE. THEY WERE GONE. THERE WAS NOTHING TO DO.
YOU WEREN'T GOING TO DO ANYTHING ANYWAY, REMEMBER?
THERE IS STILL SOMETHING I CAN DO. I CAN CALL A PRESS CONFERENCE FOR TOMORROW AFTERNOON.

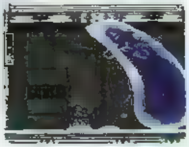
This couldn't wait 'til the 21st century.

MEGA MAN X
LICENSED BY
Nintendo
SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

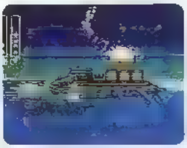
The "X" generation of Mega Man adventures is here. For the first time on the Super NES.

As his last great creation, Dr. Light developed "X"—the first thinking, decision-making robot. Years later, Dr. Cain modifies his design to make thousands of supposedly "harmless" Reploids. That is until Sigma, the most intelligent Reploid of all, decides to lead the others in eliminating all humans from the planet. Now "X" must hunt down Sigma using his all-new arsenal, including the X-Buster and the awesome Emergency Acceleration System. It's the Mega battle of the next century, found only on the Super NES.

"X" uses his X-Buster to save Zero, the leader of the Maverick Hunters from the evil Vile.



When the robotic amoeba glues "X" to the ground, either he shoots or he's stuck.



"X" destroys an enemy submarine fuel tank and things get extremely explosive.

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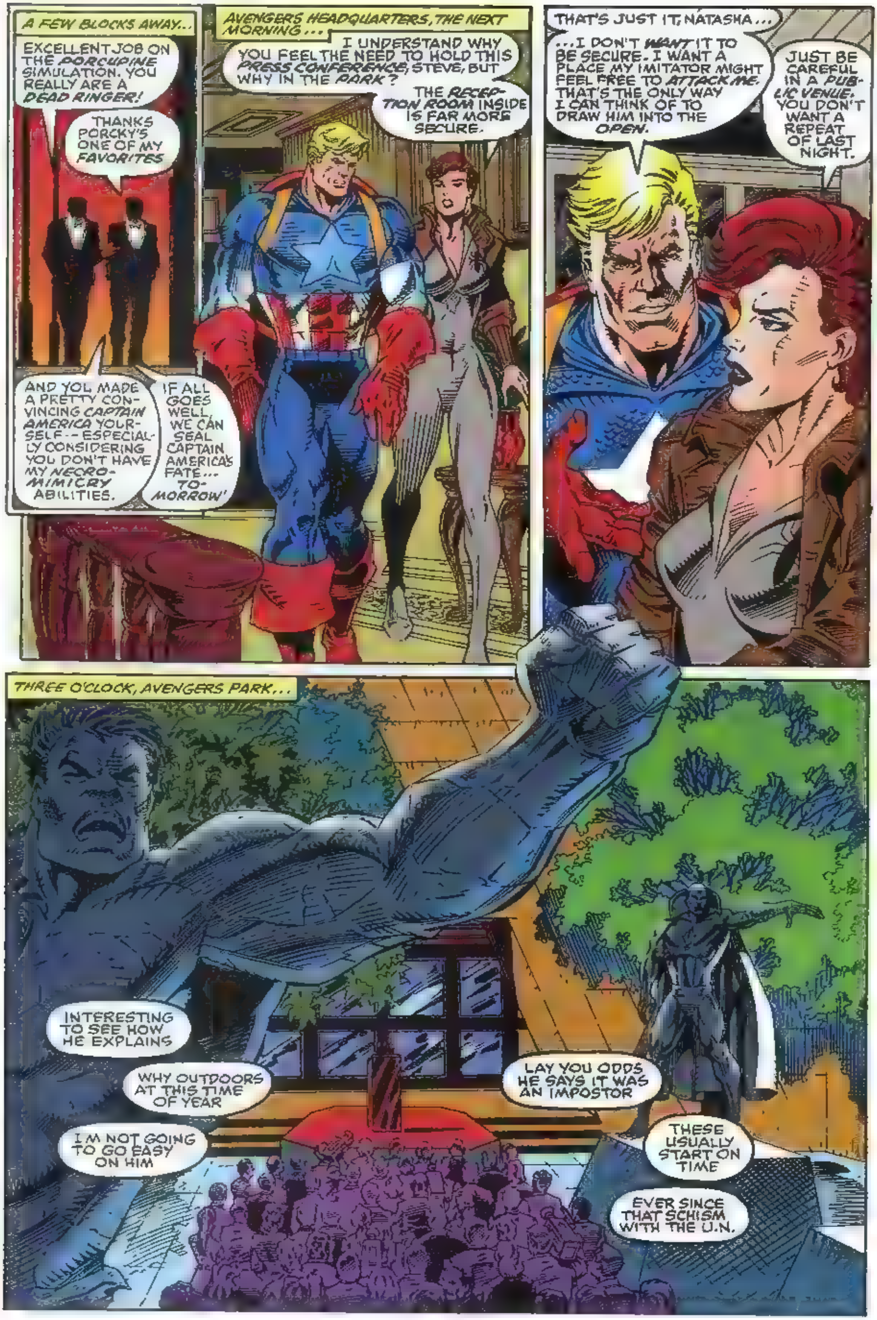
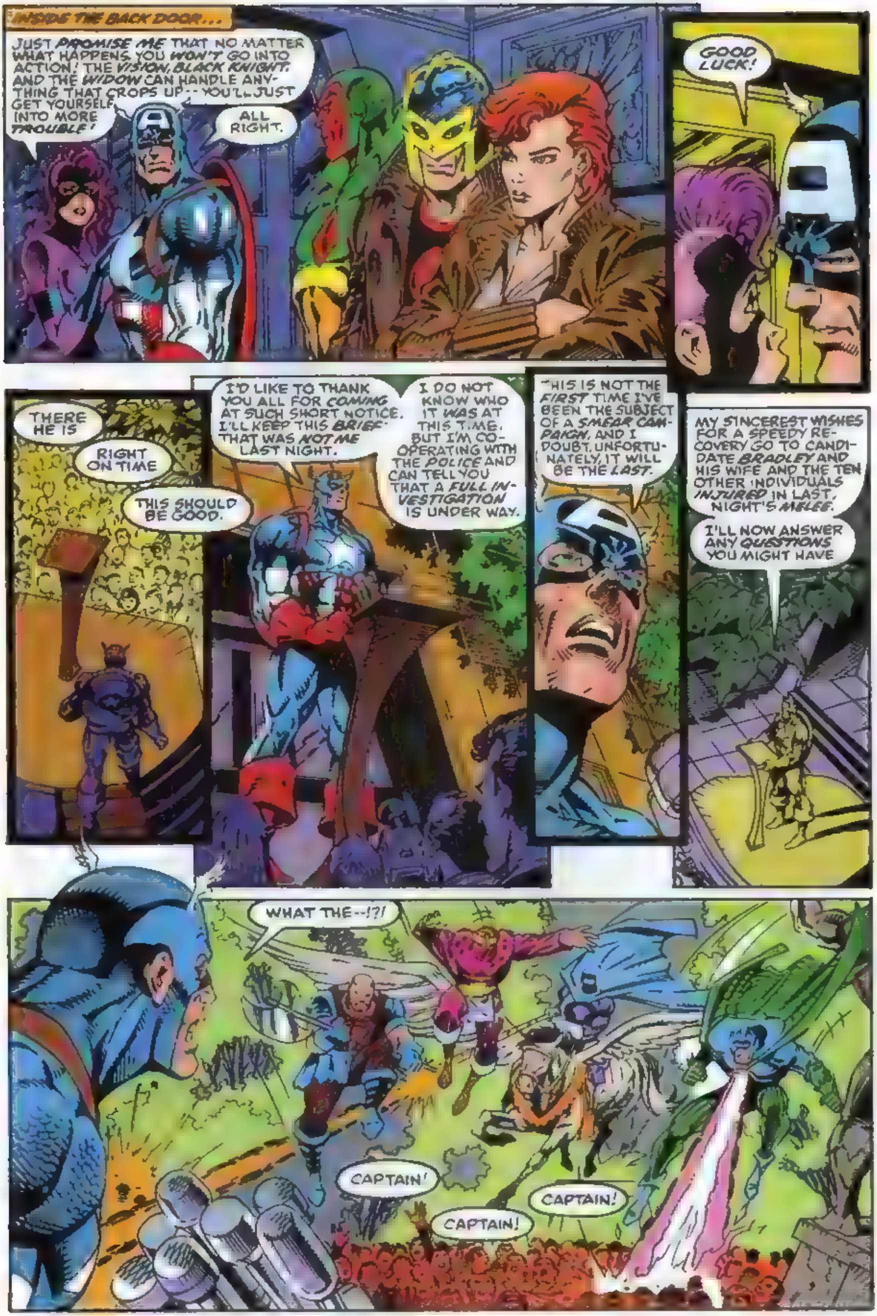
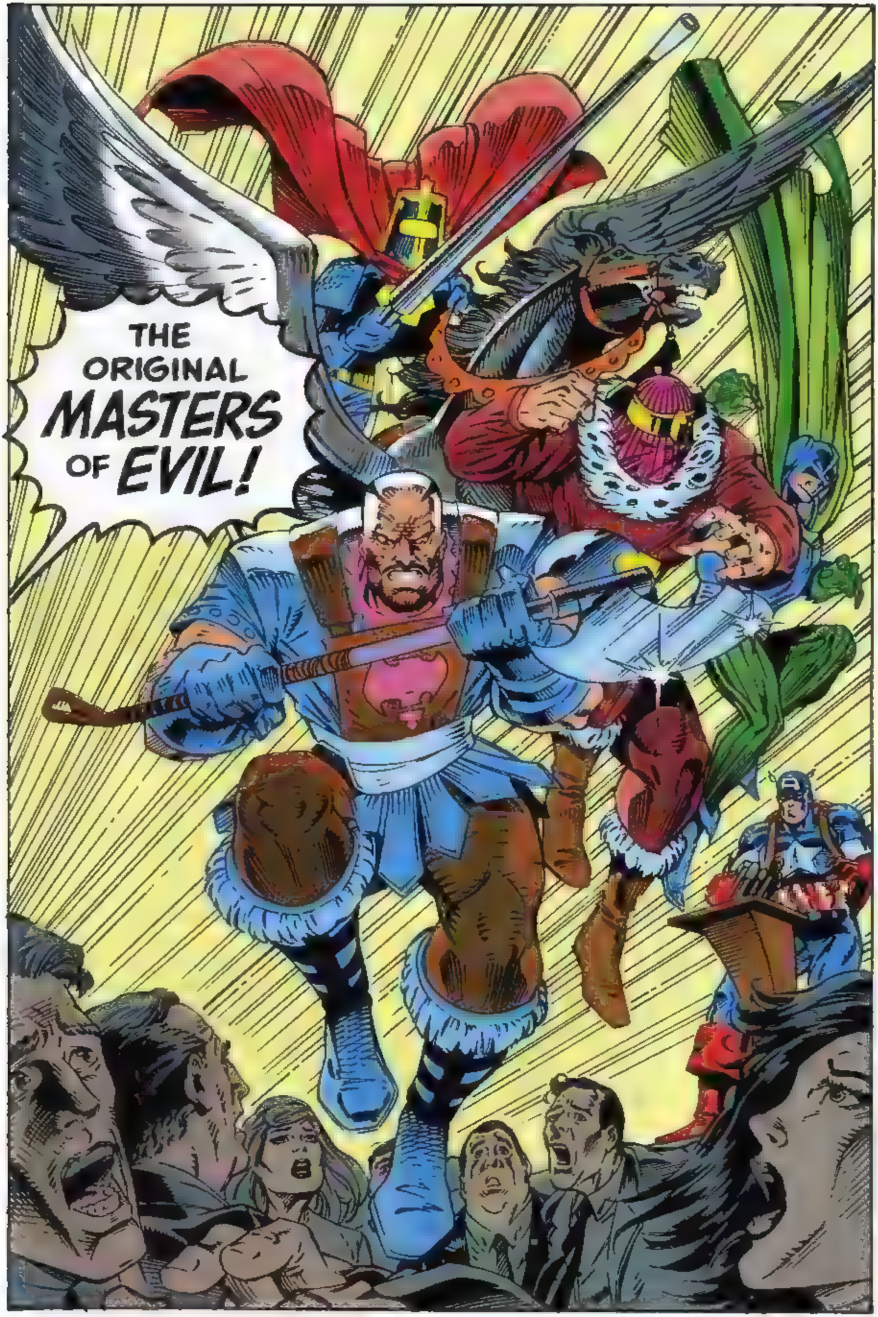
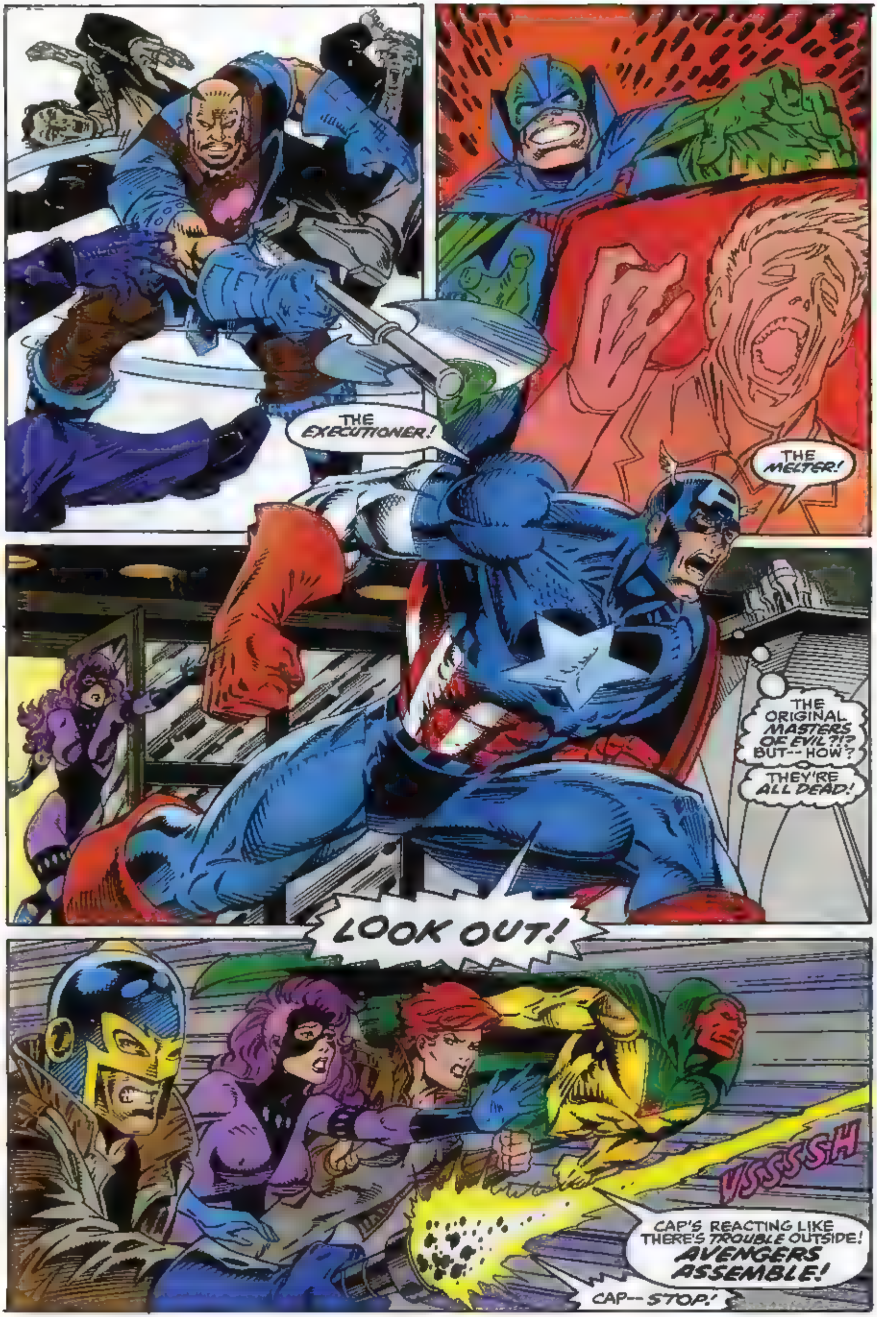
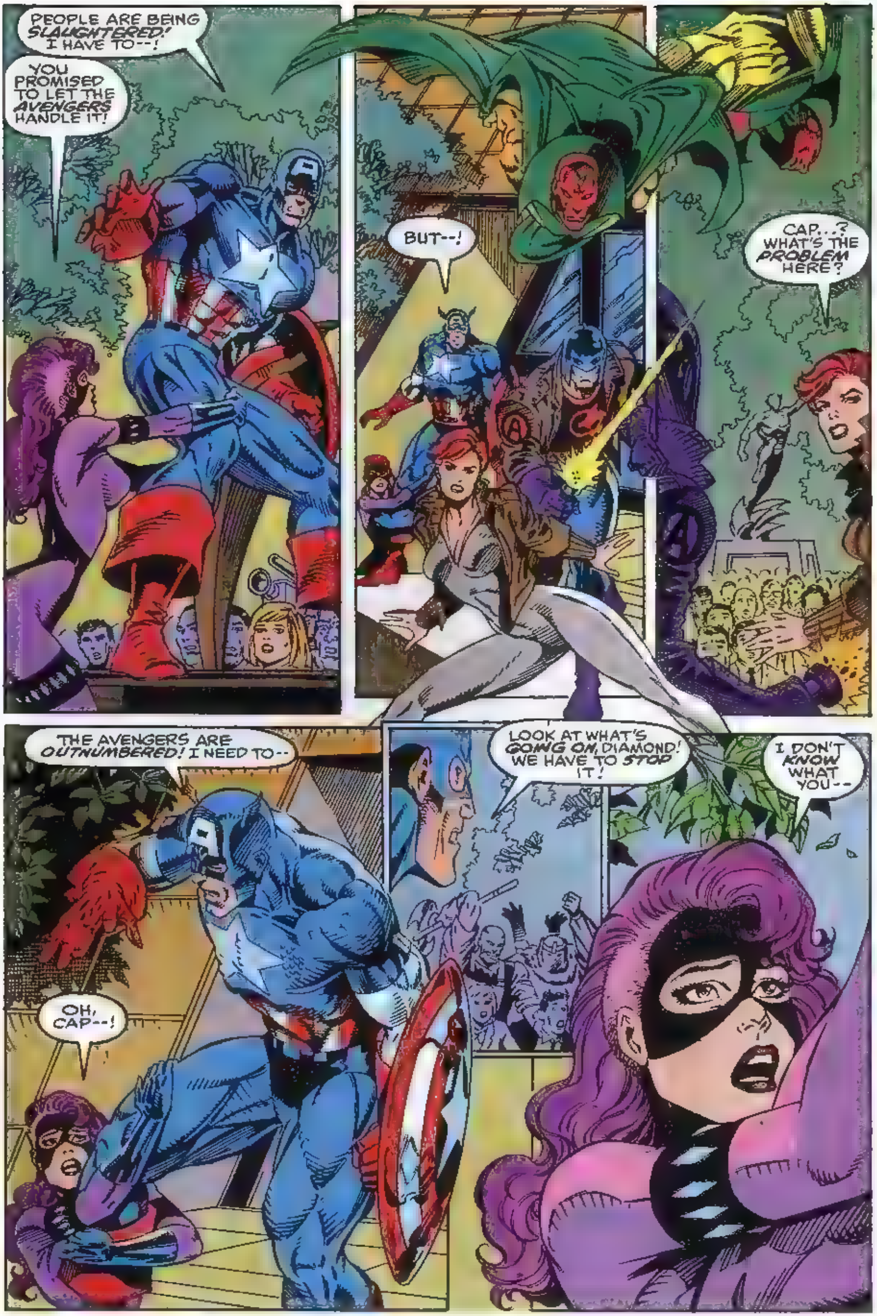
CAPCOM

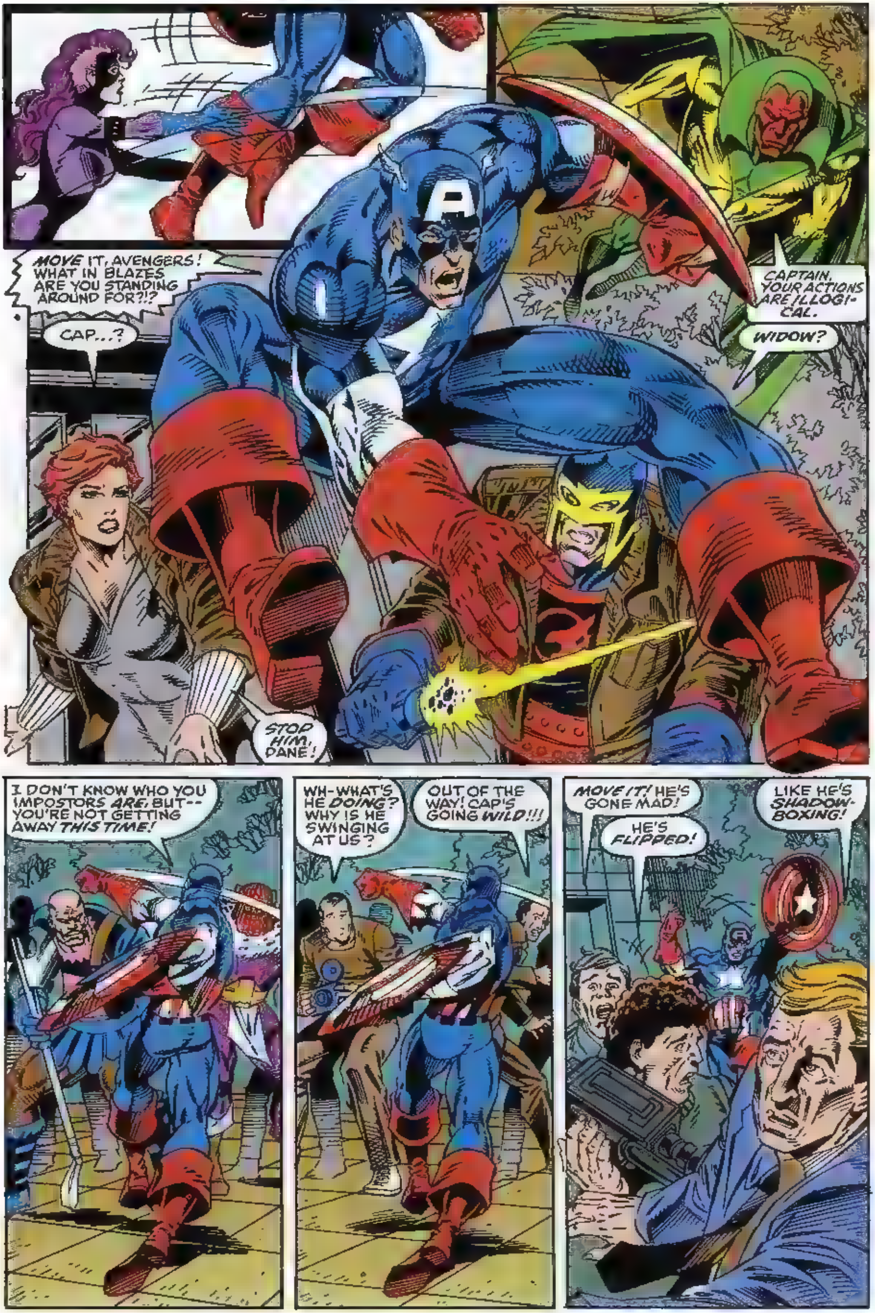

A FEW BLOCKS AWAY...
EXCELLENT JOB ON THE *PORCUPINE* SIMULATION. YOU REALLY ARE A *DEAD RINGER!*
THANKS PORCKY'S ONE OF MY *FAVORITES*
AND YOU MADE A PRETTY CONVINCING *CAPTAIN AMERICA* YOURSELF -- ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING YOU DON'T HAVE MY *NECRO-MIMICRY* ABILITIES.
IF ALL GOES WELL, WE CAN SEAL CAPTAIN AMERICA'S FATE... *TOMORROW!*
AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS, THE NEXT MORNING...
I UNDERSTAND WHY YOU FEEL THE NEED TO HOLD THIS *PRESS CONFERENCE,* STEVE, BUT WHY IN THE *PARK?*
THE *RECEPTION ROOM* INSIDE IS FAR MORE SECURE.
THAT'S JUST IT, NATASHA...
...I DON'T *WANT* IT TO BE SECURE. I WANT A PLACE MY IMITATOR MIGHT FEEL FREE TO *ATTACK ME.* THAT'S THE ONLY WAY I CAN THINK OF TO DRAW HIM INTO THE *OPEN.*
JUST BE CAREFUL IN A *PUBLIC VENUE.* YOU DON'T WANT A REPEAT OF LAST NIGHT.
THREE O'CLOCK, AVENGERS PARK...
INTERESTING TO SEE HOW HE EXPLAINS
WHY OUTDOORS AT THIS TIME OF YEAR
I'M NOT GOING TO GO EASY ON HIM
LAY YOU ODDS HE SAYS IT WAS AN IMPOSTOR
THESE USUALLY START ON TIME
EVER SINCE THAT SCHISM WITH THE U.N.

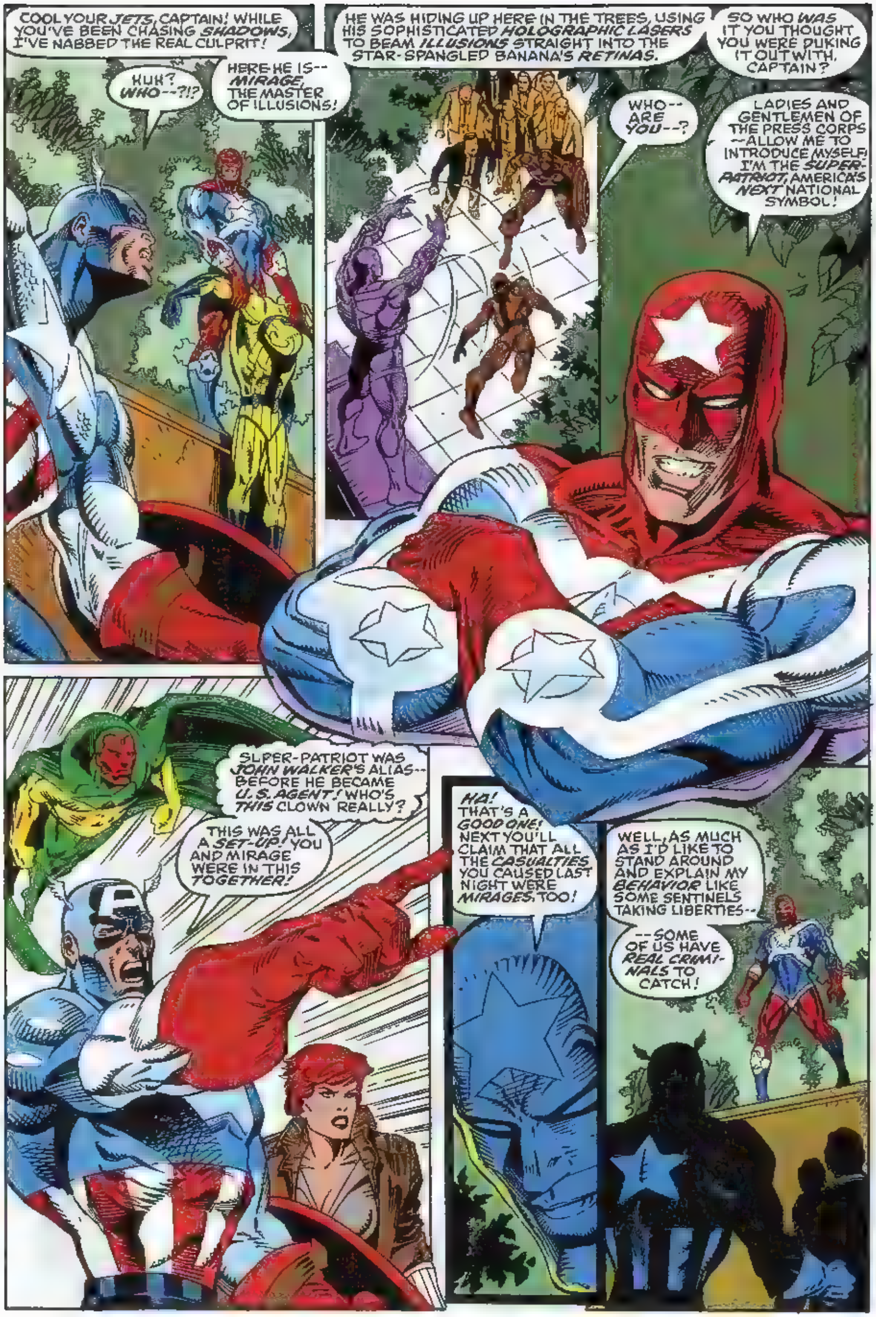

INSIDE THE BACK DOOR...
JUST PROMISE ME THAT NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, YOU WON'T GO INTO ACTION! THE VISION, BLACK KNIGHT AND THE WIDOW CAN HANDLE ANYTHING THAT CROPS UP-- YOU'LL JUST GET YOURSELF INTO MORE TROUBLE!
ALL RIGHT.
GOOD LUCK!
THERE HE IS
RIGHT ON TIME
THIS SHOULD BE GOOD.
I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING AT SUCH SHORT NOTICE. I'LL KEEP THIS BRIEF-- THAT WAS NOT ME LAST NIGHT.
I DO NOT KNOW WHO IT WAS AT THIS TIME, BUT I'M CO-OPERATING WITH THE POLICE AND CAN TELL YOU THAT A FULL INVESTIGATION IS UNDER WAY.
THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME I'VE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF A SMEAR CAMPAIGN, AND I DOUBT, UNFORTUNATELY, IT WILL BE THE LAST.
MY SINCEREST WISHES FOR A SPEEDY RECOVERY GO TO CANDIDATE BRADLEY AND HIS WIFE AND THE TEN OTHER INDIVIDUALS INJURED IN LAST NIGHT'S MELEE.
I'LL NOW ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE
WHAT THE--!?!
CAPTAIN!
CAPTAIN!
CAPTAIN!

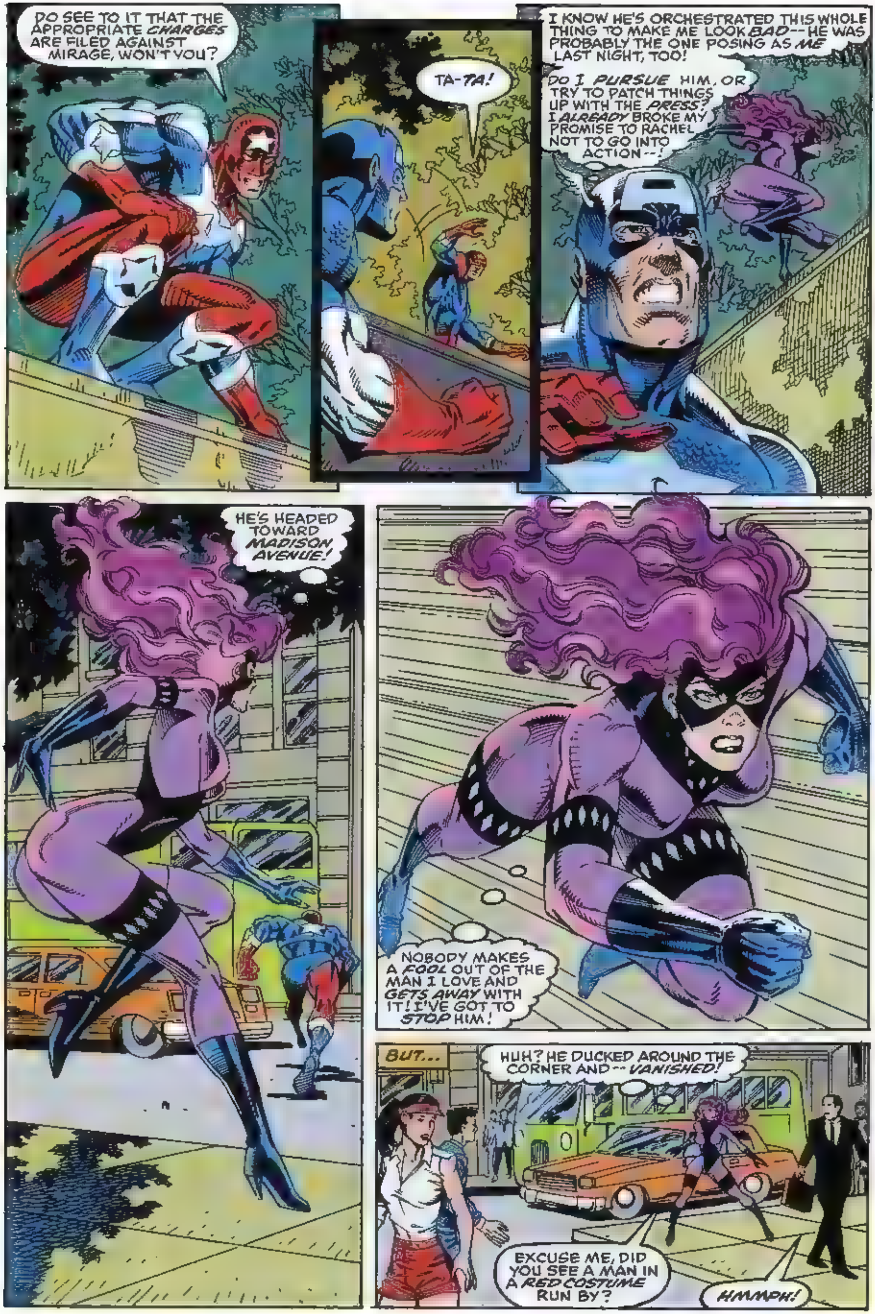

THE ORIGINAL *MASTERS* OF *EVIL!*

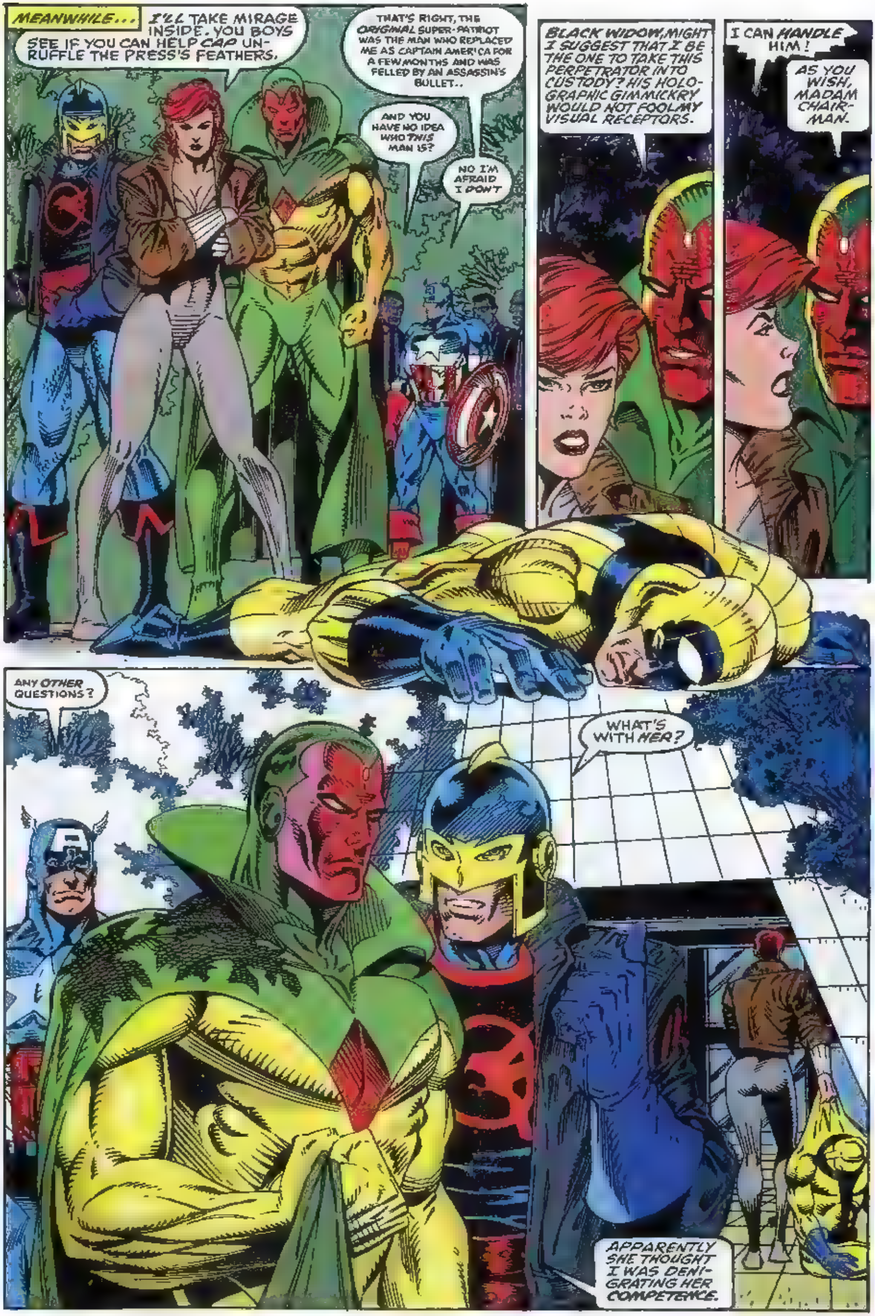

THE EXECUTIONER!
THE MELTER!
THE ORIGINAL MASTERS OF EVIL?!? BUT-- HOW?
THEY'RE ALL DEAD!
LOOK OUT!
VSSSSSH
CAP'S REACTING LIKE THERE'S TROUBLE OUTSIDE! AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!
CAP-- STOP!

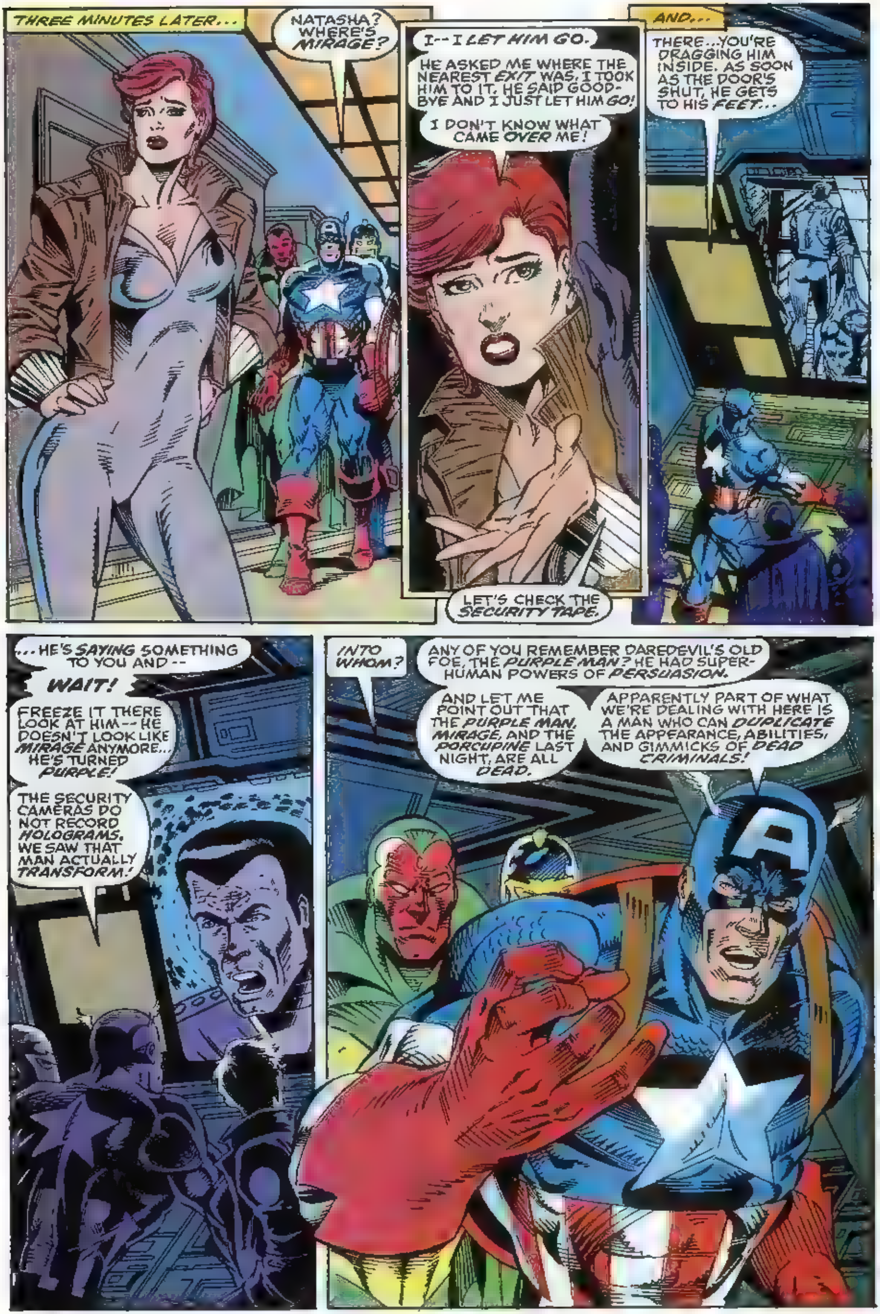

PEOPLE ARE BEING *SLAUGHTERED!* I HAVE TO--!
YOU PROMISED TO LET THE *AVENGERS* HANDLE IT!
BUT--!
CAP...? WHAT'S THE *PROBLEM* HERE?
THE AVENGERS ARE *OUTNUMBERED!* I NEED TO--
OH, CAP--!
LOOK AT WHAT'S *GOING ON,* DIAMOND! WE HAVE TO *STOP* IT!
I DON'T *KNOW* WHAT YOU--

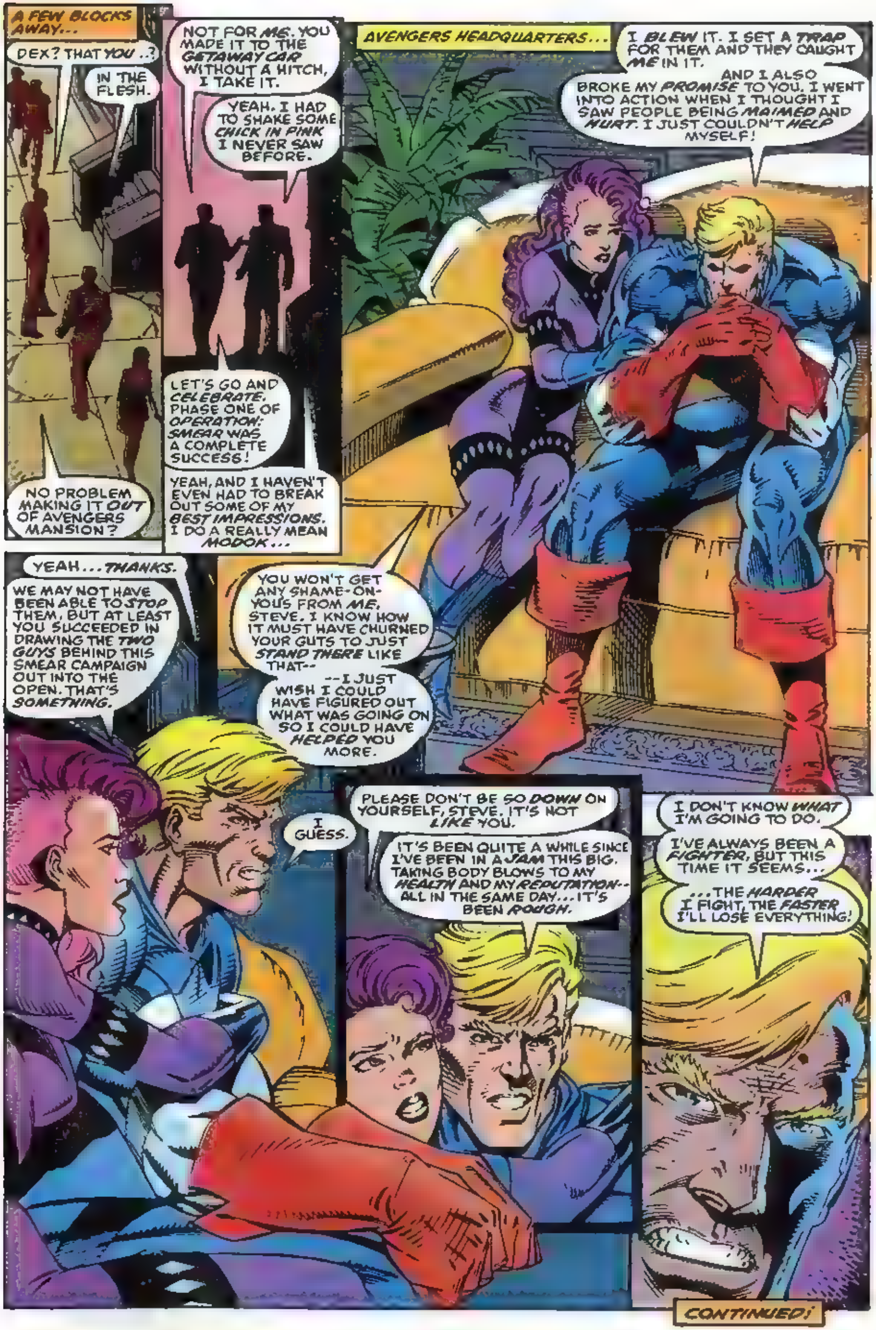

MOVE IT, AVENGERS! WHAT IN BLAZES ARE YOU STANDING AROUND FOR?!?
CAP...?
CAPTAIN, YOUR ACTIONS ARE ILLOGICAL.
WIDOW?
STOP HIM, DANE!
I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU IMPOSTORS ARE, BUT-- YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY THIS TIME!
WH-WHAT'S HE DOING? WHY IS HE SWINGING AT US?
OUT OF THE WAY! CAP'S GOING WILD!!!
MOVE IT! HE'S GONE MAD!
HE'S FLIPPED!
LIKE HE'S SHADOW-BOXING!


COOL YOUR JETS, CAPTAIN! WHILE YOU'VE BEEN CHASING SHADOWS, I'VE NABBED THE REAL CULPRIT!
HUH? WHO--?!?
HERE HE IS-- MIRAGE, THE MASTER OF ILLUSIONS!
HE WAS HIDING UP HERE IN THE TREES, USING HIS SOPHISTICATED HOLOGRAPHIC LASERS TO BEAM ILLUSIONS STRAIGHT INTO THE STAR-SPANGLED BANANA'S RETINAS.
SO WHO WAS IT YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE DUKING IT OUT WITH, CAPTAIN?
WHO-- ARE YOU--?
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE PRESS CORPS --ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF! I'M THE SUPER-PATRIOT, AMERICA'S NEXT NATIONAL SYMBOL!
SUPER-PATRIOT WAS JOHN WALKER'S ALIAS-- BEFORE HE BECAME U.S. AGENT! WHO'S THIS CLOWN REALLY?
THIS WAS ALL A SET-UP! YOU AND MIRAGE WERE IN THIS TOGETHER!
HA! THAT'S A GOOD ONE! NEXT YOU'LL CLAIM THAT ALL THE CASUALTIES YOU CAUSED LAST NIGHT WERE MIRAGES, TOO!
WELL, AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE TO STAND AROUND AND EXPLAIN MY BEHAVIOR LIKE SOME SENTINELS TAKING LIBERTIES--
--SOME OF US HAVE REAL CRIMINALS TO CATCH!


DO SEE TO IT THAT THE APPROPRIATE *CHARGES* ARE FILED AGAINST MIRAGE, WON'T YOU?
TA-*TA!*
I KNOW HE'S ORCHESTRATED THIS WHOLE THING TO MAKE ME LOOK *BAD*-- HE WAS PROBABLY THE ONE POSING AS *ME* LAST NIGHT, TOO!
DO I *PURSUE* HIM, OR TRY TO PATCH THINGS UP WITH THE *PRESS?* I *ALREADY* BROKE MY PROMISE TO RACHEL NOT TO GO INTO ACTION--!
HE'S HEADED TOWARD *MADISON AVENUE!*
NOBODY MAKES A *FOOL* OUT OF THE MAN I LOVE AND *GETS AWAY* WITH IT! I'VE GOT TO *STOP* HIM!
BUT...
HUH? HE DUCKED AROUND THE CORNER AND -- *VANISHED!*
EXCUSE ME, DID YOU SEE A MAN IN A *RED COSTUME* RUN BY?
HMMPH!


MEANWHILE...
I'LL TAKE MIRAGE INSIDE. YOU BOYS SEE IF YOU CAN HELP CAP UN-RUFFLE THE PRESS'S FEATHERS.
THAT'S RIGHT, THE ORIGINAL SUPER-PATRIOT WAS THE MAN WHO REPLACED ME AS CAPTAIN AMERICA FOR A FEW MONTHS AND WAS FELLED BY AN ASSASSIN'S BULLET..
AND YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHO THIS MAN IS?
NO I'M AFRAID I DON'T
BLACK WIDOW, MIGHT I SUGGEST THAT I BE THE ONE TO TAKE THIS PERPETRATOR INTO CUSTODY? HIS HOLOGRAPHIC GIMMICKRY WOULD NOT FOOL MY VISUAL RECEPTORS.
I CAN HANDLE HIM!
AS YOU WISH, MADAM CHAIRMAN.
ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?
WHAT'S WITH HER?
APPARENTLY SHE THOUGHT I WAS DENIGRATING HER COMPETENCE.

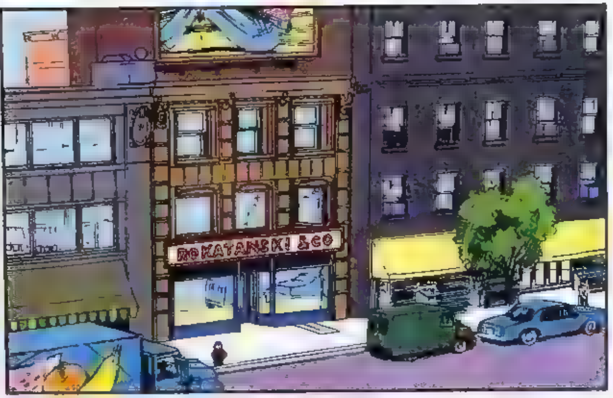

THREE MINUTES LATER...
NATASHA? WHERE'S MIRAGE?
I-- I LET HIM GO.
HE ASKED ME WHERE THE NEAREST EXIT WAS. I TOOK HIM TO IT. HE SAID GOOD-BYE AND I JUST LET HIM GO!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT CAME OVER ME!
LET'S CHECK THE SECURITY TAPE.
AND...
THERE...YOU'RE DRAGGING HIM INSIDE. AS SOON AS THE DOOR'S SHUT, HE GETS TO HIS FEET...
...HE'S SAYING SOMETHING TO YOU AND --
WAIT!
FREEZE IT THERE LOOK AT HIM -- HE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE MIRAGE ANYMORE... HE'S TURNED PURPLE!
THE SECURITY CAMERAS DO NOT RECORD HOLOGRAMS. WE SAW THAT MAN ACTUALLY TRANSFORM!
INTO WHOM?
ANY OF YOU REMEMBER DAREDEVIL'S OLD FOE, THE PURPLE MAN? HE HAD SUPER-HUMAN POWERS OF PERSUASION.
AND LET ME POINT OUT THAT THE PURPLE MAN, MIRAGE, AND THE PORCUPINE LAST NIGHT, ARE ALL DEAD.
APPARENTLY PART OF WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH HERE IS A MAN WHO CAN DUPLICATE THE APPEARANCE, ABILITIES, AND GIMMICKS OF DEAD CRIMINALS!

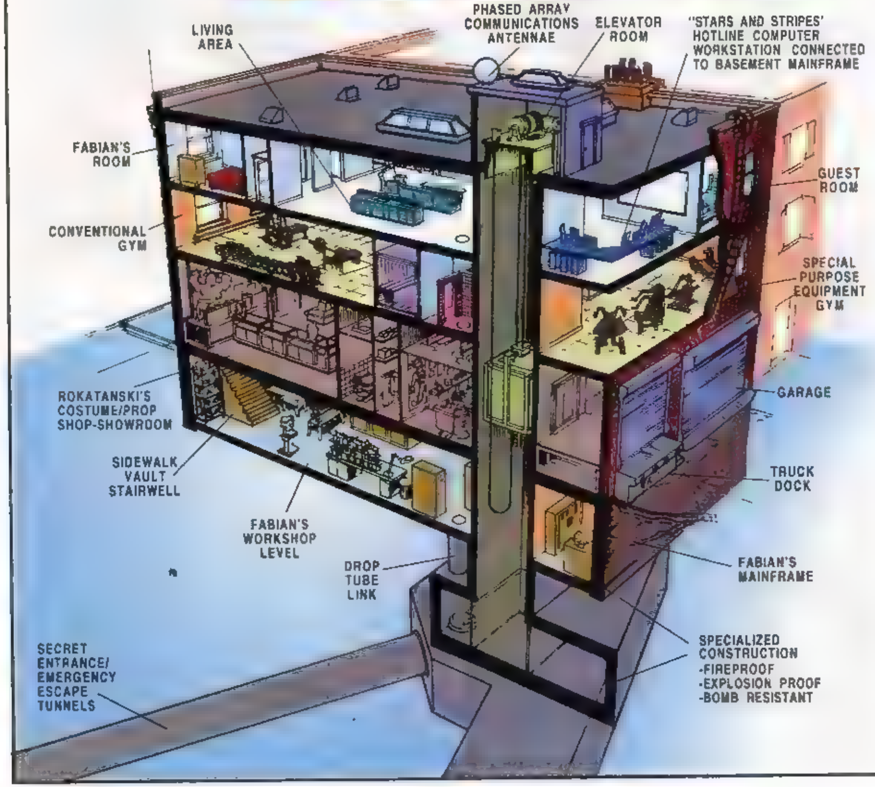

A FEW BLOCKS AWAY...
DEX? THAT YOU..?
IN THE FLESH.
NO PROBLEM MAKING IT OUT OF AVENGERS MANSION?
NOT FOR ME. YOU MADE IT TO THE GETAWAY CAR WITHOUT A HITCH, I TAKE IT.
YEAH. I HAD TO SHAKE SOME CHICK IN PINK I NEVER SAW BEFORE.
LET'S GO AND CELEBRATE. PHASE ONE OF OPERATION: SMEAR WAS A COMPLETE SUCCESS!
YEAH, AND I HAVEN'T EVEN HAD TO BREAK OUT SOME OF MY BEST IMPRESSIONS. I DO A REALLY MEAN MODOK...
AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS...
I BLEW IT. I SET A TRAP FOR THEM AND THEY CAUGHT ME IN IT.
AND I ALSO BROKE MY PROMISE TO YOU. I WENT INTO ACTION WHEN I THOUGHT I SAW PEOPLE BEING MAIMED AND HURT. I JUST COULDN'T HELP MYSELF!
YOU WON'T GET ANY SHAME-ON-YOU'S FROM ME, STEVE. I KNOW HOW IT MUST HAVE CHURNED YOUR GUTS TO JUST STAND THERE LIKE THAT--
--I JUST WISH I COULD HAVE FIGURED OUT WHAT WAS GOING ON SO I COULD HAVE HELPED YOU MORE.
YEAH... THANKS.
WE MAY NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO STOP THEM, BUT AT LEAST YOU SUCCEEDED IN DRAWING THE TWO GUYS BEHIND THIS SMEAR CAMPAIGN OUT INTO THE OPEN. THAT'S SOMETHING.
I GUESS.
PLEASE DON'T BE SO DOWN ON YOURSELF, STEVE. IT'S NOT LIKE YOU.
IT'S BEEN QUITE A WHILE SINCE I'VE BEEN IN A JAM THIS BIG. TAKING BODY BLOWS TO MY HEALTH AND MY REPUTATION-- ALL IN THE SAME DAY... IT'S BEEN ROUGH.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO DO.
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A FIGHTER, BUT THIS TIME IT SEEMS...
...THE HARDER I FIGHT, THE FASTER I'LL LOSE EVERYTHING!
CONTINUED!

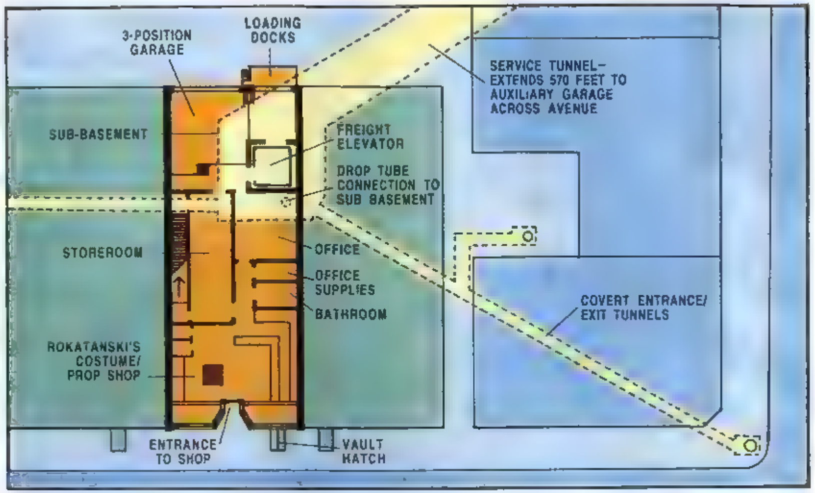
CAPTAIN AMERICA'S BROOKLYN HEIGHTS HEADQUARTERS

HOTLINE HEADQUARTERS

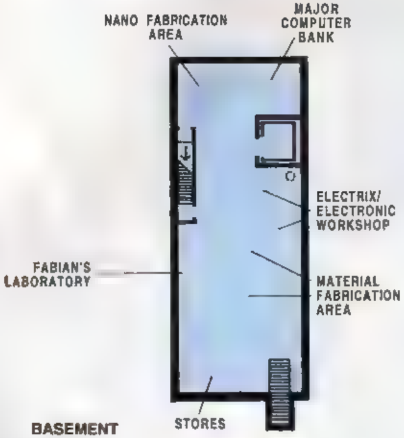
The Hotline Headquarters was originally a commercial loft space near the intersection of Atlantic and Flatbush Avenues in the borough of Brooklyn in the City of New York. The clandestine construction methods involved the underground tunneling from a nearby "safe house," or alternate secure entrance structure. The existing elevator was extended to that clandestine tunnel and the reconstruction of the interior took place in secret. The ground floor lease-holder is "Rokatanski & Co." a costume and prop shop.


ROKATANSKI &CO

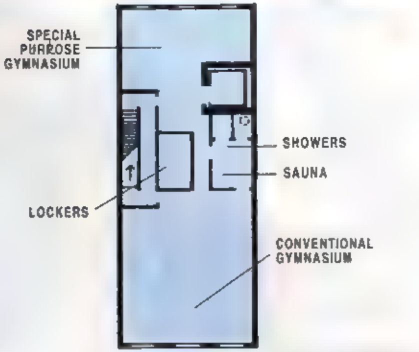

LIVING AREA
PHASED ARRAY COMMUNICATIONS ANTENNAE
ELEVATOR ROOM
"STARS AND STRIPES' HOTLINE COMPUTER WORKSTATION CONNECTED TO BASEMENT MAINFRAME
FABIAN'S ROOM
GUEST ROOM
CONVENTIONAL GYM
SPECIAL PURPOSE EQUIPMENT GYM
GARAGE
ROKATANSKI'S COSTUME/PROP SHOP-SHOWROOM
SIDEWALK VAULT STAIRWELL
TRUCK DOCK
FABIAN'S WORKSHOP LEVEL
DROP TUBE LINK
FABIAN'S MAINFRAME
SPECIALIZED CONSTRUCTION
-FIREPROOF
-EXPLOSION PROOF
-BOMB RESISTANT
SECRET ENTRANCE/ EMERGENCY ESCAPE TUNNELS

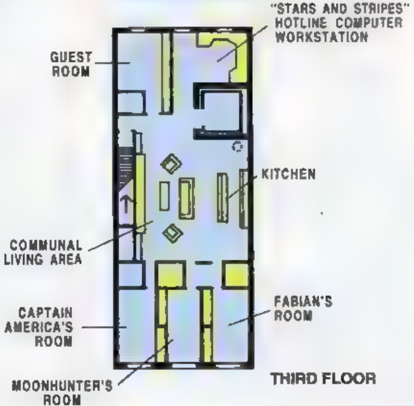

3-POSITION GARAGE
LOADING DOCKS
SERVICE TUNNEL- EXTENDS 570 FEET TO AUXILIARY GARAGE ACROSS AVENUE
SUB-BASEMENT
FREIGHT ELEVATOR
DROP TUBE CONNECTION TO SUB BASEMENT
STOREROOM
OFFICE
OFFICE SUPPLIES
BATHROOM
COVERT ENTRANCE/ EXIT TUNNELS
ROKATANSKI'S COSTUME/ PROP SHOP
ENTRANCE TO SHOP
VAULT HATCH

GROUND FLOOR AND SURROUNDING AREA


NANO FABRICATION AREA
MAJOR COMPUTER BANK
ELECTRIX/ ELECTRONIC WORKSHOP
FABIAN'S LABORATORY
MATERIAL FABRICATION AREA
STORES

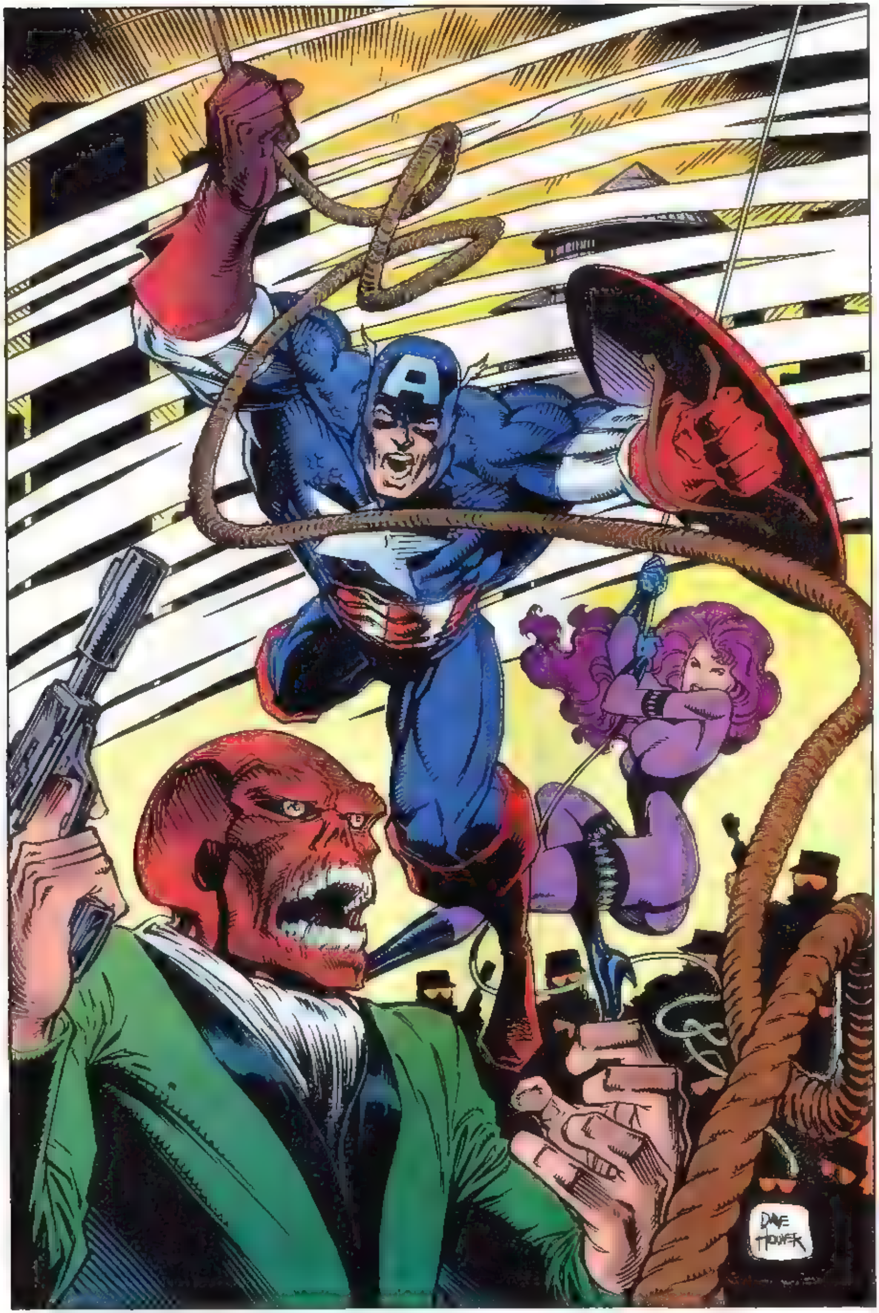
BASEMENT


SPECIAL PURPOSE GYMNASIUM
SHOWERS
SAUNA
LOCKERS
CONVENTIONAL GYMNASIUM


"STARS AND STRIPES" HOTLINE COMPUTER WORKSTATION
GUEST ROOM
KITCHEN
COMMUNAL LIVING AREA
CAPTAIN AMERICA'S ROOM
FABIAN'S ROOM
MOONHUNTER'S ROOM

THIRD FLOOR

☐ FREIGHT ELEVATOR
▫ BATHROOMS
↑ STAIRS UP
○ EMERGENCY DROP TUBE


DAVE HOOVER

DAVE HOOVER

LEVINS
&
BULANADI

MAL.

LET'S RAP WITH CAP

MIKE ROCKWITZ: EDITOR
JOE ANDREANI: ASSISTANT EDITOR

C/O MARVEL COMICS
387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10016

ATTENTION CORRESPONDENTS: ALL LETTERS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR PUBLICATION MUST INCLUDE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS THOUGH WE WILL WITHHOLD THAT INFO BY REQUEST!

Dear Mr. Rockwitz,

Now that CAPTAIN AMERICA has reached its 420th issue, it's time for a year-end review letter. I have to admit that since I started doing these year-end reviews late last year, I've been looking forward to doing one for CAP since it's one of my favorite books and I was anxious for an opportunity to praise you and the other fine folks involved in creating his monthly adventures. Here goes.

CAP #408-410 featured the rescue of Diamondback from the clutches of Crossbones and the Red Skull. Considering how long writer Mark Gruenwald allowed Diamond to stay a captive of Crossbones, the main thing I thought about as I read the story was that it was about *time* Cap got around to this excursion. I was pleased to see that in the interim, Diamond got her nerve back after the abuse she suffered at Snapdragon's hands during the clash on Superia's island. After all, it seems to me that if she's going to continue to be Cap's girlfriend, she needs to keep up with his lifestyle.

I was also pleased to see the Falcon reinstated in Cap's life. I don't really think Cap needs a full-time partner, but we don't have anywhere else where we can see the Falcon these days, and I miss him when he's not around. I don't suppose I could talk you into giving him his own book, could I?

Then there's the Skeleton Crew. Of all the villain-groups that Mark has introduced to Cap's life over the last few years, this is the one that I find the most fascinating, possibly due to the fact that we've never yet been told what factors are involved in the Skull's choice of operatives. Why these particular bad guys? What makes their skills particularly valuable to the Red Skull? I think there's a very interesting story in that. But there was one flaw for me in this particular outing: I wish that Cutthroat hadn't been killed in the story! I remember his clash with Spider-Man and Nightcrawler in MARVEL TEAM-UP some years ago, and thinking it'd be nice to see more of him. When I finally do, I learn that he's Diamondback's brother, and he up and gets killed. Arrgh!

Oh, one other thing, I'm very anxious to learn who this new Jack O'Lantern is...and what Blackwing has been up to in the years since his last bout with Daredevil while working for HYDRA.

CAP #411-413 featured Diamondback's quest for vengeance against Snapdragon... also long overdue...and a bout between Cap, Falcon, and a gaggle of super-villains at AIM's latest weapons auction. That in itself would have been enough to please me with the tale, old villain-lover that I am, but Mark didn't stop there: he also threw in a guest shot by the Master of Kung Fu! Shang-Chi is another character I have a soft spot for, and whom I'd like to see more often. It was also nice to see the longtime foe Batroc back, not to mention some of the other villains in the story.

CAP #414-417 featured Cap, Falcon, and Diamondback in the Savage Land with expected guest Ka-Zar and unexpected guest Black Panther. AIM is once more among the villains and we get to meet a High Evolutionary wanna-be in the person of the High Technician, whom I'd like to learn more about. On the downside, the inclusion of Terminus was a bit much. It's one thing to give Cap a challenge, but Terminus is more in Thor's weight class than Cap's. Who's next: Galactus?

CAP #418 resolved the D-Man storyline at long last, and if I'm not mistaken was the second appearance of the Night People! Am I way off base or did they first appear during Jack Kirby's run on the book? At any rate, it was nice to see the D-Man situation concluded, eliminating the last loose end Mark had left.

CAP #419 was the crossover with SILVER SABLE, featuring the Viper and her terrorist shenanigans. Not bad for a single issue story, but I think the differences between Cap and Sable warrant a multi-part epic to explore in detail.

Finally #420 and the clash with the Blazing Skull. I suppose it was logical for Cap to investigate any connection between this relatively new hero and his longtime nemesis. At least now it's over and they can next meet as allies. It was very interesting to learn that the Blazing Skull was actually Skull the Slayer, a real blast from the past. It kind of makes me wonder if Dr. Druid's new team will have similar surprises up their sleeves.

Well, that pretty much does it for this year. As usual, you and Mark have succeeded in making the last year's worth of CAP tales very worthwhile and I look forward to more of the same in the coming year. Next issue's crossover with NOMAD against the long-gone Dr. Faustus and the Slug already sounds promising to this old villains fanatic.

Before I go, let me give you a few suggestions for storylines I'd like to see Mark tackle: 1) More crossovers between American-produced Marvel stars and British-created ones. The Marvel UK books are never shy about recruiting US guest stars, let's make it more of a two-way street. 2) Another thing I think would be good for Cap is a world tour, a multi-part storyline that would allow him to visit various other countries and team up with their respective heroes. 3) Finally, how about an Invaders/All-Winners Squad reunion wherein Cap, Namor, and any other wartime cronies still living get together and try to learn what became of those we haven't seen since the war? I can think of several whose fates are still up in the air. Till next year...!

David Peattie
4517 Birch Bark Rd.
Concord, CA 94521

Thanks for the spiffy overview, David, and boy, are you going to have a year to review in '94! A Falcon limited series is slated for this year–happy? Yes, this was Kirby's Night People's second major appearance as a group though one of their members, Abner Doolittle, showed up in a MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE in the late 70s. The Skull and his crew will be taking a back seat for a while since we have some other villainous areas we want to concentrate on, but when they do come back, they'll do so with a vengeance!

And now, word of this issue's impending storyline innovations has apparently leaked out (albeit in a somewhat distorted fashion) providing us with a slew of cautionary and alarming mail...

Dear Madmen,

No, I don't have a warrant for your arrest. At least not yet. However, I just heard the most distressing news. In 1963 I bought AVENGERS #4 off the rack. I have purchased every Marvel comic with Captain America in it since that time, as well as countless others. The news I heard has got to be wrong. Tell me it's wrong. Steve Rogers is going to be given a terminal illness? He's going to choose a replacement to be Captain America? YOU CAN'T DO THIS! For the last 30 years, Steve Rogers has been my hero. He's been the hero for thousands for three generations. Steve Rogers created in me many of my ideals and beliefs.

If my childhood hero had been John Walker, that lunatic who tried to be Captain America a while back, I would probably be some mindless, feelingless moron the likes of which we see so many today. But my hero is Steve Rogers. I credit Marvel's creation with a major part of molding my character. Because of him I am a believer in the American Dream, not some fringe believer in "My country right or wrong," or "might makes right." In my adult life, I have upheld the law, and believe in the ethics and morals that were instilled in me at an early age.

Captain America is the epitome of human decency, the embodiment of all that is good. It's not the red, white, and blue costume. Captain America is the man underneath. I stopped believing in Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny, even the Tooth Fairy. But I never stopped believing in Captain America. The new generation needs Steve Rogers as badly as I did when I was a kid.

Why are you considering killing him off? Isn't he interesting enough? Are sales down? What does that tell you about today's society? You and Steve Rogers do this screwed-up world some good. Captain America--Steve Rogers--is the only real hero left in America. I've stood firm with Marvel, as have so many others. If you do get rid of Steve Rogers, send his uniform to me so I can come back and bonk you on the head with his shield. Until you kill Steve Rogers off, make mine Marvel.

Dennis G. Parker
Atchison County Sheriff
Atchison, KS 66002

Whoa, whoa, whoa, Sheriff Parker. Who said anything about Steve dying from a terminal disease? As you can see by the story you're holding in your hands, it is no random disease but the design limits of the Super-Soldier serum itself. And we're not talking *dying* here, simply Cap's worst nightmare–the inability to function as Cap. As for *why* we're putting Cap through the wringer, we felt that it was time to delve into Steve Rogers' head some more, and the way to do that was to give him ample reason to look inward. If all turns out as planned, we're going to give all you Cap-fans an in-depth examination of our Sentinel of Liberty like you've never read before. (And if it doesn't, well...at least you're in for some whoppin' good yarns!) Thanks for caring, Sheriff!

Dear Mike and Joe,

CAPTAIN AMERICA #421 was, in my opinion, one of the best issues of this title I have read. In it was everything I like about the character and the comic. Cap is a guy who tries to reason with his opponents, even though he could beat them up if he wanted to. He's the type of super hero I'd like to have around in real life. I also like how Mark portrays Cap's sense of humor. The book seems to have just the right mix of seriousness and humor right now. Some characters, like the Punisher, are way too grim; others, like Spider-Man, act like comic relief. Cap's right in the middle where he belongs.

In fact, in the past twelve months, Mark has written what should serve as examples on how to write this comic. The art has been exemplary since this title reached #400, too. Therefore I hope you won't throw away all this in one rash move. I recently read in a fanzine that Cap is going to acquire a fatal disease and will have to choose a replacement.

This is the *worst* thing you can do. I think it's abundantly clear by now that no one can replace Steve Rogers. In an age where grim, bloodthirsty heroes are the norm, Cap is truly unique. It would be a tragedy to the comics world if he were to die. I grew up reading this comic and I'd really hate to see Steve Rogers leave permanently. So please don't kill him. Then again, knowing Mark Gruenwald, you'll probably do something totally the opposite of what I expect (at least I hope).

By the way, whatever happened to the Resistants?

Ben Herman
45 Runyon Place
Scarsdale, NY 10583

See next issue, Ben, for the answer to your last question! And see the previous letter answer for a response to your question about Cap's health.

Dear Marvel,

Thank you, thank you, thank you for CAPTAIN AMERICA #421. Captain America actually gave a speech in the middle of a fight. Not just a speech, a good one! Now there is the Cap that we all remember and love. I take back all the nasty things I thought about you in the last year. Keep it up and more of the same.

Now if only Cap could face the Red Skull...! (At least he's facing Dr. Faustus!)

Please bring Rachel back and lose the pink hair! I liked her last costume better than the original. Let Cap and Rachel find some happiness together and let their relationship develop. I do not mean devlop in the 90s sense. Cap has always stood for the highest moral principles. Don't have him bend on them– it would not be Steve Rogers at all. We need heroes and role models like Steve Rogers more than we ever have before.

And when you do bring her back and they start talking marriage and children, *don't kill her off.* Marvel seems to have a vehement objection to marriage and children of late. I mean, just when Hawkeye and Mockingbird make up and decide to have a baby, she gets killed. A super hero, especially Cap, deserves some of the things that bring true happiness.

You really made my day when I read #421. I am so glad to see the last paragon of all that is good in us back to his former glory. Let Rachel get past her irrational lapses of late. I know how she has the Super-Soldier serum in her blood and without the vita-rays every other recipient has become psychotic. Maybe after her system adjusts and her tissues absorb the serum she'll become more rational. I also realize she has been abused of late and some of her behavior can be attributed to the victim striking out at her abusers. I hope she can get past it soon.

Okay now, a question, and please answer it. Is Steve Rogers' middle name "Grant" or not? Roger Stern and John Byrne said he did not have a middle name and the middle name of "Grant" was part of a cover identity programmed into his memory during the war. In an annual a couple of years ago he referred to himself as "Steven Grant Rogers," and the Master Edition of the OFFICIAL HANDBOOK also lists "Grant." Are some of Steve's old programmed memories coming back from time to time? Who is wrong?

Well, you've won me back. (I was never really going, but I was very discouraged.) Until Cap becomes a man of the 90s, make mine Marvel!

Capt. David Belt, WA ANG
E. 3211 Kasha Ct.
Mead, WA 99021

As we understand it, Steve's birth certificate does not list a middle name. No law says you have to have one. However, if he sometimes wants to recall the middle name he was given as a cover, hey--that's his own business. Under "Real name" in MARVEL UNIVERSE, it should not have listed a middle name. Clear?

Dear Cap Creators,

This is a comic book showing the first signs of writer burnout. The symptoms:

1) Lots of all-out action issues (of which #421 is the most recent and prime example). You've a much better chance selling me an all-out thinking issue.

2) The lack of characterization of the central cast. I don't know what I'd do if my girlfriend were kidnapped, abused, brainwashed, and came back with a different personality, but it would cause me more than a couple of panels of thought balloons before the next pointless fight. Cap's eventual response to Rachel's homicidal tendencies will be portrayed less effectively because of his lack of compassion now. When was the last time we saw Cap in a lengthy out-of-costume non-combat scene? The last really powerful character work was done back in #401.

3) The replacement of supporting cast with guest stars. Does Cap still have the Stars and Stripes network with that little hacker kid idolizing him? Or the bikers who service his bike? Even the Avengers Mansion Crew have been lacking for a long time. We need to measure the man by his friends as well as his enemies.

4) A prevalence of multi-part extravaganzas. Mark is one of the few current writers who can produce good single issues, but he seems to be letting that skill atrophy. By their nature, multi-parted adventures exclude supporting cast and make character pieces harder to write unless they are cleverly constructed.

The good news is that you haven't slipped into terminal burnout yet. You show only a mild case of Crossover Syndrome. Nor have any supporting characters gained mysterious super-powers yet. There's hope.

My prescription is to show us the person behind Cap's mask, to reestablish his life and his mission and to hook a whole new generation onto the world's archetype hero.

Ian Watson
Holly Bank, 199 Sheffield Road
Barnsley S70 4DE Great Britain

Thanks for writing, Ian. We value everyone's opinion–and while we can't please everyone all of the time, we certainly can learn what we might do better from our harshest critics. We really hope that the "Fighting Chance" storyline we've concocted addresses many–if not all– of your concerns. If not, let us know.

Dear Mike,

Re: CAPTAIN AMERICA #421. Even though the story in this issue had nothing to do with the myriad of sub-plots and other plotlines left dangling in the last couple months, and only focused on the fight between the two former partners, Captain America and Nomad, I still found "Gantlet" to be a highly enjoyable story, in which Cap once again had to stand up and not only defend his morals, but also convince his enemy of the wrongness of Faustus's twisted and sick morals.

So all things considered, CAP #421 was a good issue, well paced and complemented with decent artwork. But you'd better get back to business and tie up some loose plot threads, since some of them are about to break under the strain.

See you in a month. Deal?

Olav Beemer
Brugakker 36-06
3704 LP Zeist
The Netherlands, Europe

Deal, pal!

NEXT ISSUE: Intrigued about the new Super-Patriot and his accomplice, the Dead Ringer? We hope so. Well, next month you're going to see more of them, as well as a certain team of mutant ne'er-do-wells. All that, and more serious coping by the man with the stars and stripes about his very personal problem. Join us for..."GRAVEN IMAGES!"

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